

# Re-Integrating the Socially Excluded (RISE)

For Youth Initiative

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT | SUMMER 2017

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“It helped me become aware of what’s going on around me and helped me to go into **a better path** and learn about obstacles that I’m going to face, being young and being a minority...and how to come around those obstacles and **rise above** people’s expectations...”

~ YOUTH PARTICIPANT

# Introduction & Background

Over the past 10 years, the over-representation of African Canadians in federal custody has increase by 50%.<sup>1</sup> Integrating incarcerated individuals back into society is critical and Redemptive Reintegration Services, a culturally specific positive youth development program guiding the community reintegration of previously incarcerated African Canadian youth, has been established.<sup>2</sup> However, the reintegration process is not without its challenges, including high rates of recidivism, inadequate reintegration efforts, persistent poverty, minimal opportunities for education and employment, and inefficiency in reintegration care. Understanding the pathways of reintegration is crucial, yet has been identified as a major challenge.<sup>3</sup>

To date, research on reintegration has predominantly focused on the outcome of recidivism and has not explored the processes that are taken to foster such outcomes. Understanding the processes are critical in order for programmers to understand if they are reaching their target goals and outcomes, as well as implementing the program as planned, for who it was targeted for. From the research that has examined the effectiveness of correctional rehabilitation, the majority of evidence supports that community rehabilitation treatment has been effective and is more effective in reducing re-offense rates of convicted offenders than correctional sanctions. Visher and Travis outline that reintegration and adjustment depends on four dimensions: individual characteristics, as well as individual, family, and community influences. Such dimensions are critical to consider when developing such a program.

While programs have been developed to help youth in the reintegration process, the rise of African Canadians involved in criminal activities reinforces the need for additional high-quality programming.

## Program Description

For Youth Initiative (FYI) is a non-profit organization that provides programs and services to youth living in low-income neighborhoods in Toronto. FYI describes itself as a youth-led, youth-driven and youth-focused agency that recognizes the importance of involving local youth in the development of programs and is committed to developing leadership capacities among youth. FYI's goal is to end youth poverty by empowering youth with the tools they need to get ahead. FYI believes all young people deserve the opportunity to create successful futures.

From 2012 to 2014, FYI developed and piloted a community-based project entitled Building Lives on Community Cohesion (B.L.O.C.C) that focused on providing capacity and social supports for youth in conflict with the law. B.L.O.C.C. was a short, 2-month project to that was designed to identify the reintegration needs of youth living in Weston Mt. Dennis with previous involvement in the youth justice system.

### **There were three main areas of need that emerged throughout the consultations with BLOCC project participants.**

- First, participants identified troubles with police as a detriment to their successful reintegration in the community. For example, they outlined that police were unfairly targeting them and their community making it harder for their acceptance of societal values that consider police a positive part of the community fabric.
- Second, participants noted that there was a need for more positive role models and positive cultural references for youth in the community. The participants pointed out the lack of positive male role models who can model how to be successful through 'legal' means.
- Third, participants identified racism as a barrier that makes reintegration difficult because of the ways that young Black males are portrayed and feared in society and within their community.

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<sup>1</sup> Zinger, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Beausoleil et al., n. d.

<sup>3</sup> Visher & Travis, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Lipsey & Cullen, 2007

Based on the findings from the pilot, FYI concluded that a deeper investigation and intervention was necessary to address the growing resentment and isolation participants experienced within their communities. The challenges that were identified are compounded by the lack of educational and employment opportunities for a majority of these youth (particularly those from racially and economically marginalized communities). The observations identified by BLOCC participants confirmed many of the concerns noted in the Youth Anti-Violence Task Force report<sup>5</sup> that emphasized the importance of addressing the social isolation that youth experience through increasing healthy family wellbeing and consistent access to educational and economic opportunities.

In 2014, FYI was awarded three years of funding from the Ministry of Justice (Youth Justice Fund) to test an expanded model of B.L.O.C.C., which was renamed Re-integrating the Socially Excluded (RISE). The expanded and strengthened RISE model used an evidence-based wrap-around support model for youth ages 12-17 who were in conflict with the law, to increase leadership abilities and skills to prevent and intervene in criminal activity.

### Program Overview

RISE programming focused on four key areas:

- Employment and career
- Education
- Family well-being
- Social engagement

The program also supported youth in fulfilling their obligations to meet extrajudicial sanctions and Community Service Orders.

The RISE leadership program provided youth with opportunities to create an individual goal map, develop appropriate social skills, explore civic engagement opportunities and connect with leaders in the community that can serve as mentors and provide guidance in life planning. It was also an avenue for youth to interact with their peers and unpack topics such as bullying,

anger management, effective decision-making, and community building.

The RISE staff team consisted of one full time manager, one full time case lead, and one part-time case lead. Programming was also supported by volunteer assistance.

As outlined, RISE programming and activities were focused around four main program components as follows: academic preparation, employment preparation, mentorship, and family wellbeing. Youth participate in one-on-one sessions with their case lead at minimum bi-weekly. These sessions were often on-site at FYI but also included meeting the youth in the community and attending school appointments or court dates with the youth/family. Duration of service was one to three hours in length, depending on individual needs.

Youth participated in all forms of programming appropriate to their needs. The following sections outline the four main areas of focus within RISE programming. See Appendix B for program logic model, which illustrates the program's inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes based on these four main areas.

### Academic Preparation, Engagement, & Performance

This component entailed weekly tutoring sessions on site at FYI in the homework club space, workshops and groups facilitated by FYI staff and guests regarding related academic topics, goal setting, case management and credit recovery. Case managers spent significant time advocating within the system and supporting youth and their families in re-enrollment in school and re-engaging youth to work toward academic success. This involved coordinating with school guidance counselors, on-site meetings with vice principals and principals, and resource allocating to meet youth needs.

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<sup>5</sup> From Analysis to Action: A Collective Approach to Eliminate Youth Violence in Toronto (<http://maketorontosafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Youth-AntiViolence-Taskforce-A-Collective-Approach-to-Reducing-Youth-Violence.pdf>)

### **Employment Preparation**

Employment preparation emphasized skill development workshops, internships/job placements, case management and connection to employment services in the community, career mapping and mentoring. RISE Staff provided in-house support with resumé building, job searching and skills to help prepare youth for interviews.

Youth were also connected through partnerships with community services such as Youth Employment Services (YES) training program, Skills for Change Employment Center, and resources from Learning Enrichment Foundation, and Reality, Education and Applied Life Skills Corp (R.E.A.L.).

### **Family Support**

As the majority of youth are underage, parental involvement, support and awareness of their participation in the program was vital. Individual and family support took place on a regular basis. Parents/guardians connected with their child/ward's case lead bi-weekly, either in person or over the phone, to help connect them with additional support systems. Parents/Guardians were regularly engaged and provided support with the goal of increasing parental understanding of youth issues, improve family communication between parents and youth and support healthy well-being in the home.

### **Youth Mentoring**

The mentoring component of RISE worked to reduce social isolation and increase community connections for youth. One-on-one mentorship incorporated the pairing of youth with corporate mentors, meeting monthly either in the community or on site at FYI. External mentorship pairing was through FYI partners at institutions such as Manulife Financial, Career Foundation and Tri-Mentoring.

Monthly group mentorship sessions were offered on-site at FYI. These sessions discussed various topics related to employment and daily living. The program sessions included guest facilitators such as lawyers, police officers, financial advisors, a health & wellness coach, and a previous participant of the program who successfully exited the program. Group mentorship sessions ran approximately three hours in length.

# Evaluation Purpose

## 01. To understand if the program delivery processes were implemented as planned:

- a. Program reach towards intended audience
- b. Program successes
- c. Program challenges
- d. Areas for program improvement

## 02. To examine the perceived developmental outcomes resulting from program participation related to:

- a. Academic engagement and performance
- b. Family support
- c. Youth mentoring
- d. Personal impacts, health and wellness

### Evaluation Strategy

From 2014-2017, FYI worked with Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX) at York University to develop and implement an evaluation strategy that allowed RISE to understand and monitor program processes and outcomes related to the four key outcomes.

The evaluation strategy YouthREX developed for RISE used a Developmental Evaluation approach that allows organization to capture, respond to and learn from the process of project development.<sup>6</sup> Such an evaluation approach requires information to be continuously collected and documented relates to processes, feedback, and impact. Further, the

information gathered should be integrated into evaluative thinking to align with and inform organizational thinking. Finally, the information gathered should be used to adapt and improve programming.

Further, a multi-method approach that included both quantitative methods was taken. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding youth's experiences in RISE programming. The integration of multiple methods allowed for rich and nuanced stories pertaining to what was identified as successful and challenging in program participation, as well as outcomes that were achieved, and how and why these outcomes were achieved. This approach was useful in identifying program areas for improvement. Using multiple methods acknowledged the complexity and dynamism of experiences of youth in conflict with the law. A multi-methods evaluation strategy allowed RISE to learn from the experiences of youth and staff and adapt RISE programming as necessary to improve program delivery.

The methodology for the evaluation of the RISE Program incorporated elements of a process and outcome evaluation. The data collected in each of the three phases of the evaluation process are outlined below.

### Phase 1 (July 2015 – September 2015)

The evaluation of RISE by YouthREX at York University started in the second year of RISE programming. The first three months of the evaluation were used to review year one RISE documents to understand retroactively what activities the project took on in year one. This phase of the evaluation involved working with RISE to deepen the evidence that informed the RISE model.

### Phase 2 (July 2015 – March 2017)

The second phase of this evaluation involved conducting a process evaluation. This evaluation documents, identified and analyzed key factors that influenced the implementation and operation of RISE. A process evaluation examines how a program works and identifies key factors that influence a program's operation.

<sup>6</sup>Patton, 2006



A process evaluation looks at the culture, implementation, reach and resource use of a particular program. It is an exploration of how a project carries out its operations and how its community works together, toward its objectives. Two main data sources were used in Phase 2: Management information system and group mentoring evaluation. The evaluation team was provided access to all documents relating to RISE including the funding application, terms of reference and logic model, intake applications, monthly, quarterly and annual reports, which was part of the management information system.

Monthly and annual progress reports provided information on changes leading towards the achievement of goals, as well as information on barriers to success, new challenges or crises, and required supports to overcome these obstacles. The evaluation team reviewed these documents for a description of RISE's organizational processes. Second, the group mentoring evaluation included a number of session evaluation forms completed by youth at the end of each monthly meeting. Group Mentorship Survey participant feedback from three mentorship sessions (October 2015, November 2015, and January 2016) including the open-ended questions were analyzed and used to answer the process evaluation questions regarding how youth experience the group mentorship sessions and their satisfaction with the sessions. Results from Phase 2's evaluation can be found in the [interim report](#).

### **Phase 3 (January 2017-June 2017)**

Process and outcome evaluations were conducted in the final phase of evaluation. A mixed-methods approach was used in which quantitative (online post-questionnaire) and qualitative methods (thematic content analysis of focus groups) were collected. Information on the Process and Outcome Evaluation Methodology and Data Sources are outlined in more detail below:

### **Quantitative Evaluation Data (January 2017 – June 2017)**

#### **1. Youth Questionnaires**

RISE worked with YouthREX and reviewed the program's logic model (see Appendix B) to develop questions for the questionnaire based on the intended processes and outcomes. YouthREX and FYI program staff reviewed the questionnaire until a consensus was reached on a final version.

Within the questionnaire, respondents were asked to answer

several demographics questions (e.g., age, gender, and education, length of involvement) and included questions to examine the following program processes:

- (a) Program reach toward intended participants
- (b) Youth's perceptions of relationship support from program staff (15 questions)
- (c) Program successes
- (d) Program challenges
- (e) Areas for program improvement

Further, the questionnaire aimed to examine if the program was successful in achieving its intended outcomes surrounding:

- (a) Academic engagement and performance (8 questions)
- (b) Employment preparation (14 questions)
- (c) Family support (6 questions)
- (d) Youth mentoring (5 questions)
- (e) Personal, impacts, health and wellness (5 questions).

Please see Appendix C for the complete questionnaire. The quantitative questions utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Additionally, open-ended questions were provided to allow respondents opportunities to explain their responses in greater detail (i.e. related to successes, challenges, recommendations for programming). These processes, outcomes and indicators are outlined in Table 1 on the following page. Data were collected using paper questionnaires and were distributed by FYI program staff during programming.

Respondents: 21 participants (19 males, 2 females) completed the RISE program evaluation questionnaire. The ages of participants ranged from 14 to 21 years, with an average of 17.14 years (SD = 1.49 years). Concerning ethnicity, 84% (n = 16) identified as Black (e.g., African, Caribbean, North American). Additionally, 5% (n = 1) of respondents identified as East Asian (e.g., Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese), 5% (n = 1) identified as Mulatto, and 5% (n = 1) preferred not to identify their race/ethnicity. The 21 participants who completed the questionnaire had engaged in the program between less 3 months to less than 2 years, with half the youth engaging for less than 3 months (48%).

**Table 1. Process evaluation indicators and data sources for Phase 3**

Process	Indicators	Data Source(s)
Program Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RISE programming is reaching targeted population</li> <li>• Meeting program goals and objectives</li> <li>• Unintended successes</li> </ul>	Intake Form Questionnaire Focus Group
Program Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers to meeting program goals and objectives</li> <li>• Unanticipated challenges</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group

**Table 2. Outcome evaluation indicators and data sources for Phase 3**

Outcome	Indicators	Data Source
Academic Engagement and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased school interest</li> <li>• Improved academic skills</li> <li>• Increased confidence in academic ability</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group
Increased Employment Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased knowledge of employment opportunities</li> <li>• Improved soft skills</li> <li>• Increased awareness of networking and placement opportunities</li> <li>• Increased employability</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group
Increased Family Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased parental understanding of youth issues</li> <li>• Communication between parents and youth</li> <li>• Attendance of workshops</li> <li>• Improved communication between parents and youth</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group
Increased Youth Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• Improved social skills</li> <li>• Increased awareness of volunteer opportunities, school-based activities and clubs</li> <li>• Increased connections with community leaders</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group
Personal Impacts, Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved emotional regulation</li> <li>• Increased knowledge of risky behaviours</li> <li>• Reduced involvement in gang/criminal activities</li> </ul>	Questionnaire Focus Group

### **Qualitative Evaluation Data (April 2017 – June 2017)**

The qualitative component of the outcome evaluation aimed to examine if the program was successful in achieving its intended outcomes, as identified within the program's logic model.

1. RISE Staff Focus Group: The two main RISE program staff participated in a joint interview (focus group) in May 2017. Questions related to program delivery, interactions with youth, perceived successes, challenges, and outcomes were asked (see Appendix D for focus group guide).
2. RISE Youth Focus Group: Eight RISE participants engaged in a one-time focus group in May 2017. Questions related to perceptions of program staff, likes and dislikes of programming, and perceived outcomes related to their experiences in RISE (see Appendix E for focus group guide).

### **Analysis**

Quantitative data analysis was done using Excel software on the quantitative survey data and is presented descriptively. The open-ended question responses were analyzed and summarized by YouthREX staffs using NVivo computer software.

**“Building relationships with [youth] is the most important because they come to us with almost anything and everything. And to know that they have someone there they can talk to because maybe they can’t talk to anyone at home. **It’s really important.**”**

~ RISE PROGRAM STAFF

# Evaluation Findings

This report builds from the process evaluation findings that emerged as part of Phase 1 and 2's evaluation, which was included in the **Interim Report of Spring 2016**. New data that were collected in Phase 3 are presented in the following sections. Findings that emerged throughout the three-year evaluation are integrated into the recommendations section.

## Process Evaluation Findings

### RISE Programming Successes

From the process evaluation, four main themes emerged related to program successes: (a) the program is reaching its target population, (b) program engagement, (c) program staff are supporting youth's basic psychological needs and fostering positive relationships with youth, and (d) contextual aspects of RISE programming that youth value. Each theme is presented below.

**a) RISE Programming is Reaching Targeted Participants** The goal of RISE programming was to provide capacity and social supports for youth in conflict with the law. As such, a success of program implementation was that the program was reaching its targeted participants. Specifically, all RISE youth participants were in conflict with the law (had either engaged in criminal activity, received criminal charges or extrajudicial sanctions etc.). Table 3 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of RISE participants. Specifically, information is provided on all youth participants who engage in RISE programming (N= 101) and information from youth who completed the questionnaire (n = 21). Socio-demographic information was not gathered from those involved in the focus group to protect participants' rights to confidentiality and anonymity.

Over the past three years, the RISE program has supported 101 youth aged 14-24 years (average age = 17.5). Eleven out of 101 youth identified as female and 90 identified as male. From the 101 youth involved in RISE, 69 youth self-identified as being a newcomer to Canada and 43 individuals outlined that they were employed. Table 4 summarizes the charges against the youth. Youth's prescribed service time is one year of

intense intervention, which involved engagement in the RISE program.

Sixteen youth participated during Year One, 46 youth participated in Year 2, and 39 youth engaged in the third year of programming. Enrollment rates have remained steady from Year 2 to Year 3; however, it is important to note that retention rate in the program is high as 59% of youth that were involved in either of the first 2 years of programming, re-enrolled for at least a second year of programming. These individuals stay connected with FYI as they require ongoing, informal support and therefore are not considered active participants.

RISE staff assess the degree of intervention and support that participants need on a case by case basis. Ideally, youth are engaged in intensive programming for the first year while the following year entails minimal intervention.

Table 5 summarizes the referral sources of RISE participants. The majority of youth were referred to RISE by their parents and families, community organizations, the Extrajudicial Sanctions Program, and friends.

### b) Program Engagement

As part of RISE programming, youth were involved in one-on-one sessions and interacted with staff on a regular basis. From the 21 youth who completed the questionnaire, four participants outlined they had worked with more than 1 staff member, whereas 81% of those who responded to the question (n=15) had only worked with one staff. The majority of youth worked with the Youth Justice Case Leads, Elena (43%) and Mohamed (38%), but youth had also worked with Ben (14%), a Youth Ambassador Case Lead and Jermal (14%), a previous Youth Justice Case Lead.

A number of different programs were offered to youth as part of RISE including a homework and tutoring program, studio, leadership and civic engagement, girls' leadership, food and nutrition, and youth ambassador leadership program. Youth who completed the questionnaire (N=18) were asked what programs they were involved in as part of RISE. Findings

**Table 3.** Socio-Demographic Characteristics of RISE Participants with over 3 Years of Programming and RISE Participants who Participated in Outcome Evaluation Questionnaire

Socio-Demographic Characteristics		Total RISE Participants (N = 101)	RISE Participants who Completed Questionnaire(n = 21)
Gender	Female	11	2
	Male	90	19
Age	14	4	1
	15	3	1
	16	14	6
	17	36	5
	18	25	2
	19	7	2
	20+	12	4
Education	Grade 8	2	--
	Grade 9	7	--
	Grade 10	31	--
	Grade 11	37	--
	Grade 12	23	--
	N/A	1	--

**Table 4.** Charges against RISE Clients

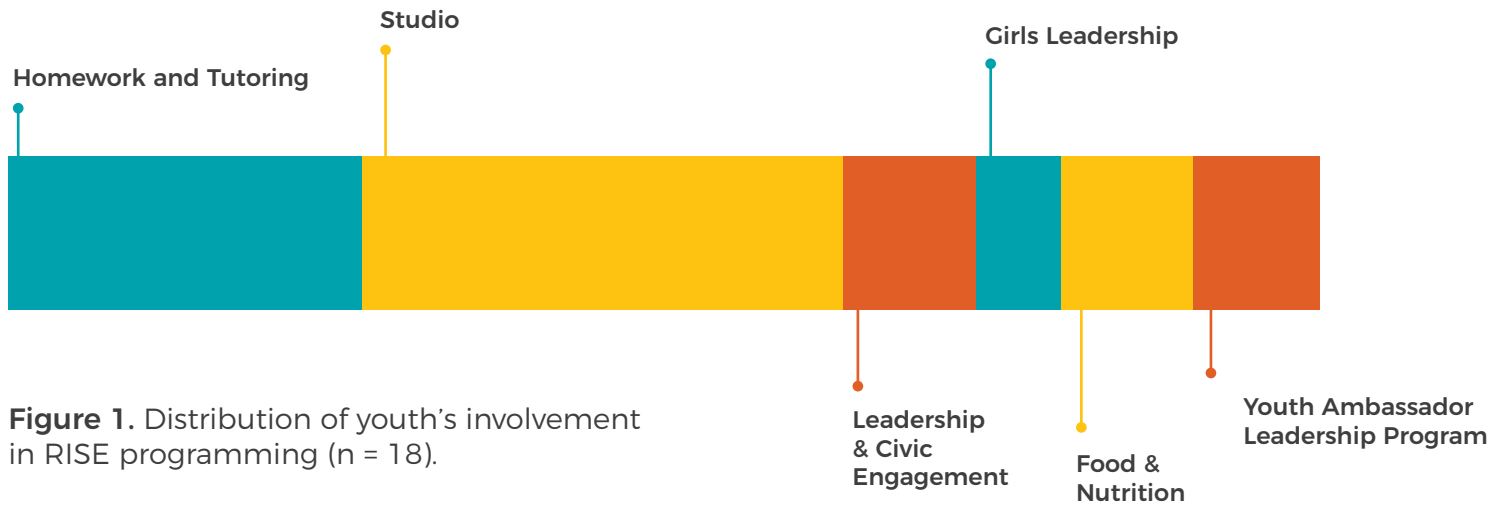
Offence	Number
Assault and Violence	36
Breach of Probation	8
B&E, Trespass, Prowling	8
Drug Charges	12
Officer-interaction charges	5
Property-related charges	5
Robbery and Carjacking	17
Theft	23
Trafficking	1
Weapons Charges	4

Table 4.0: The charges do not add up to the sample of N = 101 because many participants faced multiple charges.

**Table 5.** RISE Clients' Referral Sources

Referral Source	Number
Police	9
Court or Lawyer	8
Probation Officer	4
Bail Program	2
EJS Program	14
Parent or Family	22
Friends	10
Community Organization	20
School Guidance Counsellor	7
Outreach	5
Self	4

Table 5.0: The referrals do not add up to the sample of n=101 because some participants were referred by multiple source



**Figure 1.** Distribution of youth's involvement in RISE programming (n = 18).

outlined that most youth participated in the Studio program (11) as well as homework and tutoring (8). Three youth outlined they engaged in Leadership & Civic Engagement, Food & Nutrition, and Youth Ambassador Leadership Program and two youth outlined they participated in the Girls Leadership program (see Figure 1). Youth engaged in between 1 and 3 programs (M= 1.72); 8 of the 18 participants outlined they engaged in 2 or more programs.

One staff who participated in the focus group spoke of how staff have been working as a team to involve RISE youth participants into a number of programs with the goal of increasing their social networks:

One of the things that we are trying to do is to get them socially involved into a lot of programs, but a lot of them, depending where they are from, they don't like, because they have been in conflict with the law they don't feel comfortable going into any and every space. That's a trend.

Youth spoke specifically about programs they found valuable. For example, one youth outlined how the homework club was beneficial:

I just got help with my homework, tutoring. It really helped a lot, you know, because they explained the process.

It was good because it allowed me to get my homework done every day.

Other youth spoke about how they benefited from the Studio program:

I'm a producer so when I came here and they offered me to make a beat, I was happy with that because I wanted to make a beat.

Another thing I was involved in was I made a beat for a program, for something For Youth Initiative, and I enjoyed that because I like producing beats and it help me show my talent.

If anything I could say it embrace it, by helping me and giving me things to practice, like even if I, like say I was a singer and stuff and I was shy, they would let me book time just to go in the studio and embrace myself basically, not only, if you're just lost, they'll help you find something, they'll help you find yourself. If you already know what you're doing, they'll give you a path and let you embrace yourself.

A unique program that was a part of the Youth Ambassador Leadership Program was called Rising Researchers. This program was a newcomer youth-led participatory action research project that sought to understand the systemic barriers that propel newcomer youth into gangs and criminal activities. Youth spoke in detail about how Rising Researchers allowed them to learn about relevant issues and how it helped facilitate communication between youth and their families:

It helps me become aware of what's going on around me and helps me go on a better path and learn about obstacles that I'm going to face; being young and a minority.

When I was in Rising Researchers I learned a lot of stuff that I didn't know, and then I'd come home and I'd tell my mom about a lot of that stuff, and then she also learned stuff she didn't know, and it helped us become more aware.

Coming here has taught me a lot and, especially Rising Researchers. I learned the most out of that [program]. I learned how people see me, how authorities see me, how society sees me, how I should see myself, how should I be seen by others and how to deal with problems, how does society see problems. It just teaches me everything, like they know everything I'm going through right now and the things that other people are going through, and it's good to know that they know, and it teaches you how to compass that, and how to do the best you can do.

One staff spoke of his perceived value of Rising Researchers:

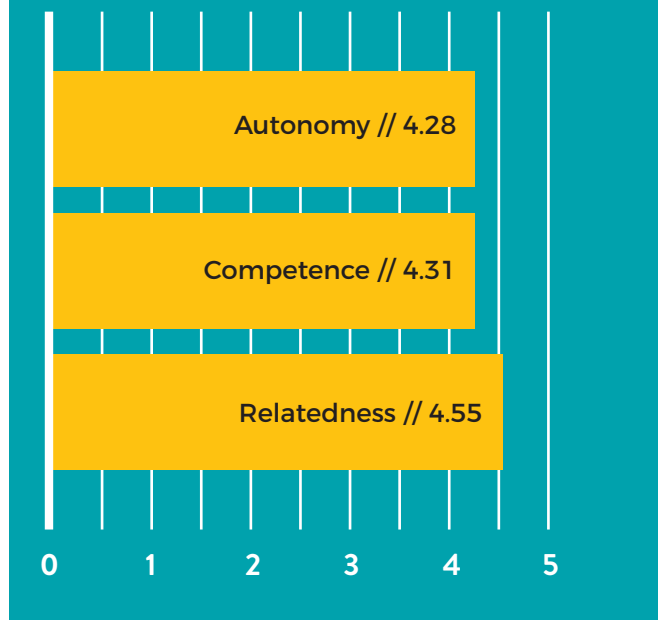
Rising Researchers was busy, we always had a lot of people, why? They were able to participate, but they also got something from it at the end. Not only did they get money, they get to say 'I helped with a PAR research. This is what I did' written down here. So that's something to show on a written paper and they got money. So, when we don't have that, it's hard to

facilitate certain programs that you can attend if it's not school or anything with them getting a job or a paid program.

The staff went on to outline how providing honourariums as incentives for engagement in Rising Researcher was useful:

I found that to be very useful and we did give them honorariums for coming because we got some funding for that, so not only did they get to learn about what's going on and the issues they are facing, they got to see everyone else in the room going through the same thing and they are getting some money in their pocket for participating.

**Figure 2.** Youth's perceptions of autonomy-, competence-, and relatedness-support from RISE program staff measured on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



**c) Program Staff are Supporting Youth's Basic Psychological Needs and Fostering Positive Relationships with Youth**

A modified version of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) was completed by 21 youth participants which assessed youth's perceptions of psychological needs support.



**Table 6.** Sample items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire related to their perceived support of autonomy, competence, and relatedness by program staff.

Subscale	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
<b>Autonomy</b>			
I felt that the staff provided us with choices and options.	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	18 (85%)
The staff encouraged us to ask questions.	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	18 (85%)
<b>Competence</b>			
The staff made us feel like we are able to do the activities in the program.	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	19 (90%)
I felt that the staff liked us to do well.	1 (5%)	4 (19%)	16 (76%)
<b>Relatedness</b>			
The staff encouraged us to work together.	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	20 (95%)
The staff were interested in us.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (100%)

Psychological needs were assessed as research has shown that fostering these three needs will result in enhanced psychological development and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) outline three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). Supporting autonomy in a youth program relates to youth have the ability to make choices and act in accordance with their sense of self, such as setting and working towards goals. Competence is defined as youth's need to feel a sense of mastery within their environment such as the feelings experienced when one achieves a goal. Finally, relatedness is when youth have a sense of belonging both with other individuals in the program (youth and staff) and with one's community; caring for and being cared by others. In this evaluation, psychological needs support was measured using the LCQ. This measure examines youth's perceptions regarding the degree to which their program coaches supported these three psychological needs and is measured on a 7-point scale. Overall, the average of the three subscales of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were 4.28 (SD=.19), 4.31 (SD=.017), and 4.55 (SD=.22), respectively (see Figure 2 on the page 16). Table 1 above provides some example questions from each of the three subscales.

Results from this questionnaire indicated that the program staff did a great job at fostering a sense of relatedness between youth and between themselves and youth, as well as their community. Specifically, all youth felt the staff showed an interest in them as people. Further, youth felt they could experience a sense of mastery in the program activities and work to achieve their goals. Finally, youth felt they had the ability to make choices and had a voice in the program.

In line with the above finding, youth identified having positive relationships with staff as a predominant success of RISE programming.

The program has a positive effect on my connection to mentors because I didn't have much mentors before I came here. Now being here, I have a lot of mentors, a lot of people I can talk to when I have a problem, whenever I need something, I know I can come here and get that help.

I got pretty close with [staff] because I see them every day after school, but because they were placements I kind of got sad after a while because after a while I don't get to see them. They're only here for like a couple of months. It was good while it lasted though. But while they were here, most of the times, we'd see them every day, depends on who they were, they'd have your phone number and they would check up on you if they don't see you.

When I first came here, I was first introduced to [staff] and I didn't know what to think at first, but then after working with him, I realized that he's very patient, like if I mess up, he will help me get through that and succeed, and he's also very chill and calm, so like I could talk to him. After that, I met [staff] and [staff] talked to me about my charges, and he showed me a bunch of cases and showed me how the Crown sees my charges, you know Crown judges people not just based on their charges but based on their parents, their living, all sorts of stuff like that, and [staff] was also very patient and he was very understanding. Then I met [Name of Person] and [staff] was very easy to talk to, and also patient and understanding, so the people here are great.

Honestly, the person who had the biggest impact on me was [staff]. Honestly, he was there with me from the beginning from my charges, all the way until now. He comes with me to court, advises me, gives me the best advice he can give me, you know, tells me what to do and how, you know, reduce my charges and what makes a court system, how the court system looks at it a different point of view. It's all thanks to [staff]. He's the biggest impact I had over here.

Staff spoke of how the foundation of the program is built on the importance of strong, trusting relationships with youth:

Building relationships with [youth] is the most important because I think they come to us with almost anything and everything. And to know that they have someone there they can talk to because maybe they can't talk to anyone at home. It's really important. You'll get text here and there, unfortunately, you're always

working. Some people don't believe in giving out your number, but sometimes I do in case of an emergency right? They may want to contact you to let you know what's going on before they call their mother. So it's just having that relationship, understanding compassion and that we are working together and I'm not just your worker, we are a team and we are working together to better you. So, the relationship is really important.

Youth participants discussed how program staff helped provide valuable support for them in preparing for court and in court:

I was in a confused state compared to so many charges I had, so thanks to [Name of Person], he had a big impact on me, he's like a role model to me because for him, he helped me a lot to the point, I didn't know what charges, I didn't know how to deal with these charges and everything, but he every time he kept telling me relax it's okay, there's always a way around everything you know, and he told me, keep moving forward, don't put yourself down, and then that switched my point of view and now thanks to him, I'm not getting no charges, you know, as I was doing previous, before, and ya so now my point of view is different now, my personality got better, now I'm not kinda shy I can talk to people, you know.

This program helped me a lot because when you're sitting down and you're by yourself in a cell—from my personal experience, then the one [staff] in this program comes in...They come on your behalf and when you realize there's no support you actually have, sometimes even your own family might not support you, right? But then seeing this person and you go into these types of programs, it actually helps you, wakes you up. Then when they bring you out and you actually get out of jail, you actually sit down and look yourself in the mirror, you actually realize and tell yourself 'thank God I'm outside one more time, I can fix myself one more time', you know, so this program actually gave me like a lot, like how to change my whole point of view the way I used to look at life.

**Figure 3**

A word map of contextual factors that youth valued in RISE programming.



### Contextual Factors of RISE Programming that Youth Valued

As part of the questionnaire, youth were asked to identify their favourite aspects of the program.

When you see a person come with you to court, you know, and cares about you, you finally realize this person is trying to help you for the better, to better yourself, to change your life so you can move on forward again. So it had a positive impact on me.

Sometimes [staff] will call me and ask me 'you're going to court tomorrow?', I'm like 'yeah I will see you at court tomorrow'; he'll come with me.

Moreover, one staff spoke of how they provided this support to youth in court:

One of the things that my team does is provide the [youth] support at the courts...FYI is the only organization that they can go and get support with the help of duty council. We support them in front of the judge. We go in front of the judge...we tell them that for this individual, we will tailor the [RISE] program for them.

Finally, one youth and one staff spoke of FYI being like a second home to him and a program staff reinforced this was what they were trying to accomplish:

I like it because they didn't make it like a program here, they kinda made like a home; you don't feel like you have to go, and that's what made it good. (youth)

[Youth say] 'I can get help with school, I can come here to eat if I'm hungry', so it helps them not to be on the streets as much and come here; basically have a second home. (staff)

## RISE Programming Challenges

Despite the identified program success, a program is not without its challenges. Staff spoke of two levels of challenges: macro-level challenges that occurred at a society level which influenced RISE programming and micro-level that occurred within day-to-day RISE programming.

### Macro-Level Challenges

A program staff discussed how the structure of the criminal justice system penalizes the youth which causes challenges for youth reintegration and their opportunities to thrive within society:

One of the biggest challenges that I've seen are the courts systems are predominately made to punish the person rather than look at what is the resolution to the fact, rather than just simply because the youth has done something which is not acceptable by the system.

Another staff spoke of the lack of alternative programs offered to youth, like RISE programming:

Instead of punishing within the courts, offer programs. You know, nowadays they [systems] are looking more into programs such as this one, the RISE program. There are ways that they can do it...Just locking them up or giving them more punishment doesn't divert them from their activities whether it is jail, whether it is house arrest, whether it is any kind of punishment.

In attempt to overcome this challenge, staff discussed relevant topics to try and empower youth:

We're empowering them and talking about topics that affect them in their everyday lives. For example, it might be certain levels of intuitional and systemic racism. Stuff that they don't know what it is, but I feel like they should be learning about this because it's affecting them and maybe they're not doing as well in school. It's not only because, they are basically being stereotyped. Them being aware of the barriers that are facing them then maybe they can overcome them. Or

find other resources to support them. So that's what our sessions are about and we kind of usually start off with having a group activity, like an ice breaker type of things, pick a topic.

Finally, staff spoke of the lack of program funding at the government levels being challenges when trying to deliver high-quality programming for this target population.

### Micro-Level Challenges

Program staff spoke of a number of challenges they experienced during program delivery related to the heavy workload, being understaffed and issues with time management. Moreover, staff spoke of challenges experienced related to day-to-day programming including lack of attendance and engagement. Staff also spoke of challenges in communicating with youth and their families. Some quotations provided by staff in the focus group are used to support and provide additional context to the quotations below.

#### Heavy workload and understaffed program, which resulted in difficulties with time management

It's a lot especially when they are court mandated and they have to meet you for eight counselling session all by this date, but you have eight other clients who have eight counselling sessions to be done by this date.

If we had an extra person. We always want to help and take on more, but we can't so it's unfortunate that we can't take on more youth because we don't have that support. Because you don't want to take on more and then you have to cut your counselling session or cut times with everybody because you're trying to accommodate everyone.

It's like how do you manage your time and then you still have other youth in the building. So that's hard.

## Lack of attendance and engagement from youth in programming

That's hard and then I guess another challenge that is normal when you work with young people. You schedule an appointment and they don't show up and they forget. You go to court, if you don't remind them, they're not going to go.

Mentors is easy, friends is still something we're so, it's still something we have to work on cause a lot of people here have already made their own friends. So it's getting a new face who sometimes might be only here for the required three months, so it's trying to get them engaged so much with the other youth that they want to come in after their stuff is dealt with. So, we are still working on ways to do this.

## Lack of court support training for FYI staff

I'd like to see that FYI teach the same way they have their staff. Representing in the courts... they should be able to turn around and have these kinds of trainings for the other workers you know what I mean, that would be ideal, so we don't need to be the only one's doing it.

## Communication with youth and parents

Trying to call them, their phone is off. They got a new number and it takes you two weeks to find them. So that's just everyday challenges. You have to find them on social media and be like 'hey you gotta come in.' so that's probably the biggest thing.

We try our best to keep [parents] as informed as possible and keep them updated, whether it be phone calls...mostly phone calls end up happening with their parents...or even email. I think it's still important for them to know what is going on and know that it is safe space here and keep them updated on the progress. And they want to know that their child is doing better.... but it's hard.

“Being here taught me that **I’m more** than what people think I am. Being here, I was showed how important it's to be in school and how it’s important to get a job and stay away from crime and stuff that can get you charges, because it’s only going to hurt me. [Staff] showed me that **I’m better** than the person I thought I was.”

~ YOUTH PARTICIPANT

# Outcome Evaluation Findings

## Socio-Demographic Information of Outcome Evaluation Participants

Twenty-one youth completed the end-of-program questionnaire (see Table 2 for general socio-demographic information on these participants). Further, these participants identified as predominantly Black (84%; e.g., African, Caribbean, North American), East Asian (5%), Mulatto (5%), and 5% of the sample did not wish to disclose their ethnicity. Nearly half the sample (48%) has been involved in RISE for less than 3 months, while others had been involved for 3-6 months (14%), 7 months to a year (19%), and more than a year, but less than 2 years (19%).

The following sections summarize the findings of the questionnaire and focus groups related to RISE Program outcomes including: (a) academic engagement and performance, (b) employment preparation, (c) family support, (d) youth mentoring, and (e) personal impacts, health and wellness. The quantitative findings from the questionnaire are presented first, followed by the qualitative findings from the staff and youth focus groups.

## Academic Engagement & Performance

The RISE program had three main indicators related to the intended outcome of increasing youth’s academic engagement and performance. These included: increased school interest, improved academic skills, and increased confidence in academic ability. Youth were asked questions related to these outcomes based on their participation in RISE programming. The following section outlined findings from 21 youth who completed these questions as part of the questionnaire.

Table 7 summarizes the responses to the eight questions pertaining to academic engagement and achievement from the questionnaires completed by 21 youth. Additional graphs depicting the evaluation results are provided in Appendix F. Youth’s perceptions of academic achievement were predominantly positive as the majority of youth outlined participating in RISE increased their interest in school (90%). Furthermore, 16 (76%) youth indicated that they get better grades in school since participating in RISE. In line with this, the majority of youth were eager to well in school (90%) and only 4 youth (19%) felt like dropping out of school. Finally, 17 (80%) of youth outlined that they plan on attending college or university after high school. It is important for the program

**Table 7.** Items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire related to their perceived academic engagement and performance.

Since participating in RISE, I...	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
Have increased my interest in school	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	19 (90%)
Get better grades in school	2 (10%)	3 (14%)	16 (76%)
Only miss school if I have a good reason (i.e., sick, Dr.’s appointment)	5 (24%)	5 (24%)	11 (52%)
Feel like dropping out of school	14 (67%)	3 (14%)	4 (19%)
Am more motivated to go to school	2 (10%)	6 (29%)	13 (61%)
Am eager to do well in school	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	18 (90%)
Get discouraged about school	14 (70%)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
Plan to go to college or university after high school	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	17 (80%)

staff to recognize that some youth were discouraged about school and some youth still feel like dropping out, despite having plans to attend post-secondary education. Strategies should be facilitated to encourage youth to attend school and provide them with the necessary supports to work towards attending post-secondary school or career path.

Within the focus group, staff spoke of how they support youth to gain access to proper education when needed:

If they are out of the school, we are going to find a school for them, whether it is alternative school or whatever.

Youth discussed how program staff emphasized the importance of school and supported the youth in their journeys through the education system.

They [staff] show you that school is really important. If you're not here in the homework club or if you're just here in general, like you'll see that everyone's getting something done, and when you get something done, there's a point to getting it done. And if you don't have your school and everything, no one's really going, you don't really have anything to say because you don't have your education, right?

To be honest, I had my high school diploma and I was going to college, but after my first year of college, I got a little sidetracked. [Staff] put me back on track and told me without an education, how the court system look at it, from a different point of view so other people when you're, especially when you're involved in the court system and everything and you have charges, you have to better yourself to show them that you're trying to better yourself and move forward, so I got a little bit sidetracked. Then thanks to [staff]; he put me back on that track and now in September, I'm going back to George Brown for my construction management and moving on forward with my life.

It made me realize that if you, when you skip class more often then you're going to fail, so go to class and do work and you'll pass.

[Staff] showed me that education is number one and that friends, they can barely help you graduate school, get jobs, anything. So it put me back in place and I have good marks.

## Employment Preparation

The RISE program had four main indicators related to the outcome of increasing youth's employment preparation which included: increased knowledge of employment opportunities, improved soft skills, increased awareness of networking and placement opportunities, and increased employability. Youth were asked questions related to these outcomes based on their participation in RISE programming. Based on program demographic information that was gathered, 34% of youth are paired with a mentor in an employment field they are interested in. This opportunity provides support from an adult for youth to understand information about the sector and what steps are needed to become involved in the specific field.

The following section outlines findings from 21 youth who completed the questionnaire. Additional graphs depicting the evaluation results are provided in Appendix F.

Overall, youth outlined that RISE programming helped them become more prepared for the employment sector. Specifically, youth noted that they became aware of possible employment opportunities (80%), and placement opportunities (66%). Further, youth identified that they improved and expanded their job skills (57%) and soft skills such as how to manage their time and problem solve (76%). More work can be done on helping youth become aware of placement and networking opportunities, as well as helping youth narrow down and focus on specific career pathways that align with their goals. These findings further are supported by both staff and youth quotations from the focus groups:



**Table 8.** Items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire (n = 21) related to their perceptions of employment preparation based on involvement in RISE programming.

Since participating in RISE, I...	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
Became aware of possible jobs	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	18 (85%)
Have improved how I manage my time and/or money	0 (0%)	5 (24%)	16 (76%)
Have learned skills that have made me job-ready	0 (0%)	6 (29%)	15 (71%)
Became aware of networking opportunities (e.g., Power of One, By For With Youth, networking events hosted by other employment organizations)	1 (5%)	6 (29%)	14 (66%)
Became aware of placement opportunities (e.g., employment skills training workshops, Smart Serve certification, CPR/first aid)	1 (5%)	7 (33%)	13 (62%)
Have increased my knowledge of employment opportunities	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	17 (85%)
Have improved my soft skills (i.e., communication, problem solving, decision making, time management, punctuality, team player)	1 (5%)	4 (19%)	16 (76%)
Taught me valuable skills	0 (0%)	4 (19%)	17 (81%)
Helped me to focus on specific career pathways that align to my life goals	0 (0%)	6 (29%)	9 (42%)
Improved and expanded my job skills	0 (0%)	5 (24%)	12 (57%)
Increased the number of professionals in my social network	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	12 (60%)
Improved my attitudes toward others (e.g., my peers, kids, teachers, law enforcement)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	17 (80%)
Helped me understand there are better ways to solve problems than fighting.	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	17 (80%)
Increased my knowledge of community supports/resources available to me (e.g., placement, internship, job opportunities)	1 (5%)	5 (24%)	15 (71%)

Staff spoke of the instrumental and tangible support youth gain access to employment if needed:

If they needed the money, then we will try to get them part-time jobs.

We have a worker who works with the youth so she'll help you with your resumé building and then anything that's coming up in the area, she has resumé building workshops, she has how to keep a job workshops or the basics 101 that they may not be familiar, like the dos and don'ts, things that like is really beneficial to them and it helps them a lot.

Youth spoke of how program staff helped prepare them and search for jobs:

Someone was actually working with me, help me with my resume, all of that. They would give me places to go to get jobs and they tell you different organization...it helped a lot...I'm working now, but they helped me get my resumé and, and look for jobs, know how to look for jobs...like the certain websites I have to look for.

[Staff] taught me that school is definitely important, but even more than that, it taught me that there's certain things I can get in school other than just the credits, like I can learn stuff to better myself, and I can make new connections and meet new people that will help me with my future. And for jobs (unclear) job fairs and stuff that will help me find a job, and I haven't found one just yet, but soon I will find a job.

### Increased Family Support

Five indicators were identified related to increasing family support within RISE programming: increased parental understanding of youth issues, communication between parents and youth, attendance of workshops, youth grades and attendance in school, and improved communication between parents and youth. Youth were asked questions related to these outcomes based on their participation in RISE programming. In both the questionnaires and focus group, youth were asked about their perceptions of family support based on their experiences in the RISE program. The results are presented below in Table 9. Additional graphs depicting the evaluation results are provided in Appendix F.

**Table 9.** Items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire (n = 21) related to their perceptions of family support based on involvement in RISE programming.

	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
My experiences in the program have improved the quality of my relationships with my parent(s) and/or guardians	0 (0%)	7 (33%)	14 (67%)
My parents(s) and/or guardian(s) are interested in my life	2 (10%)	4 (19%)	15 (71%)
I seek advice from my parents(s) and/or guardian(s) about school and/or employment	2 (10%)	4 (19%)	15 (71%)
I value the opinion(s) of my parents(s) and/or guardian(s) about my future	3 (14%)	3 (14%)	15 (72%)
My parents(s) and/or guardian(s) ask me what I want to do with my future	3 (14%)	5 (24%)	14 (67%)
My parent (s) and/or guardian(s) attend workshops offered within RISE	7 (33%)	3 (14%)	11 (53%)

“It strengthened my **family bond** because I never used to take in my parents’ point of view. They obviously wanted me to do better, right? But thanks to RISE, now I understand it... I finally realized that they just want me to succeed in life and have **a better life** for myself, right? ”

~ YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Overall, 72% and 71% of youth identified that they value the opinions of their parent(s)/guardians(s) and that their parent(s)/guardians(s) are interested in youth's lives, respectively. Further, youth outlined that their experiences in the RISE program helped them improve their quality of parent/guardian relationships (67%). However, 38% of youth disagreed or were neutral with the notion that their parent(s)/guardians(s) asked them about what they wanted to do with their future. Moreover, only 53% of parents/guardians attended RISE workshops. As such, RISE staff should work to continue to try and engage parents in the workshops offered as well as one-on-one mentoring sessions to increase engagement and interest in youth's future. Specifics are outlined in the recommendations section. These findings are further supported by both staff and youth quotations from the focus groups.

Staff discussed how they tried to foster better relationships between youth and their families:

We have one-on-one sessions alone when we just talk about family and like building the relationships. It's I think it's a little bit easier for me too cause I'm not that much older than them in a way, so I can relate I know what it's like to be in high school and having your mom do this or your dad do that or whatever your guardian, so we work out ways. And I think I am able to connect with them on that level that they're able to understand and deal with it differently when their moms are talking to them. Our goal too at the end is to have a better relationship with your family. So that is a goal along with everything else. And I think it's working.

Youth spoke of how they believed their parents found comfort knowing they were in a safe space when at RISE:

I think it changed my family in a positive way because it's not only they know I'm in a safe place, but they know that basically my parents. When I got my charges, my parents were like 'alright, you got it on yourself, you're getting it off yourself', so when I came here, they knew that someone's with me going to court and everything, someone's here to help me get jobs so it's a hell of a less stress off them.

They know I'm in a safe place and people are looking after me.

It's helpful because it's less stress off their mind... because they know around me kids are in good hands, so as a parent, if you know your kids are in good hands, afterschool it's a dangerous time.

Youth spoke about how participation in RISE helped to strengthen their family bond, while others spoke about how it aided with increased communication and awareness:

It strengthened my family bond because I never used to take in my parents' point of view. They obviously wanted me to do better, right? But thanks to the RISE, now I understand it, they, the same thing RISE wanted for me is to do better, the same thing my parents wanted me to do better, now I understand from my parent's point of view, so now me and my parents do understand each other and I finally realized that they just want me to succeed in life and have a better life for myself, right? So obviously it strengthened my family bond.

[My parents] know what's going on with me, between my charges and stuff.

My mom understands, and she wants to listen to a lot of stuff I say now because when she sees that I'm doing work and it's easier to listen to someone who's doing good than someone who's doing bad and you can see negative stuff happening to them.

[My parents] have more of an understanding of what I want in life.

Finally, a staff discussed that one of his favourite program elements was that parents attended and were engaged in RISE programming which allowed for increased communication and understanding between youth and parents:

I really loved that parents were present and they were also present. And we did that; How youth feel about parents, how the parents feel about youth. You know what I mean? So that was awesome.

### Increased Youth Mentoring

Four program indicators were identified related to the outcome of increased youth mentoring. These included: increased awareness of benefits of volunteering, improved social skills, increased awareness of volunteer opportunities, school-based activities and clubs, and increased connections with community leaders. As part of the questionnaire, youth were asked about their experiences related to youth mentoring in the RISE program. The results are presented below in Table 10. Additional graphs depicting the evaluation results are provided in Appendix F.

Overall, youth perceived their experiences in the program as helping to increase mentoring pertaining understanding the importance of volunteering, improving their support system, and increase connections with community leaders.

Based on findings from the focus group, youth spoke about how they benefited from the one-on-one counselling session:

I enjoyed the counselling because it just taught me to stay out of trouble and stuff. (unclear) she said become a follower and not a leader.

Youth participants also spoke about how being involved in RISE has provided them with a positive place to be and away from previous social circles:

Ever since I've been going here I've been spending like, I don't really spend that much time with the people I used to hang around with, my mom likes that a lot.

A lot of the mentors got close with me, like outside of FYI, I would actually meet up with some of the mentors and some of the people from here, and this is where I actually I got my girlfriend.

**Table 10.** Items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire (n = 21) related to their perceptions of youth mentoring based on involvement in RISE programming.

My experiences in the program have...	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
Increased my awareness of the importance of volunteering	1 (5%)	5 (23%)	15 (72%)
Allowed me to make new friends	0 (0%)	8 (38%)	13 (62%)
Improved my support system (i.e., I now have mentors/adults in my life that I can trust)	0 (0%)	3 (14%)	18 (86%)
Motivated me to want to engage in school teams and/or clubs	1 (5%)	5 (23%)	15 (72%)
Increased connections with community leaders	0 (0%)	4 (19%)	17 (81%)

Program staff spoke about how working to foster friendships and support systems in RISE programming is a program goal that comes with challenges:

Getting them all together is the hardest thing because we want them to help around with everything, we can do, help them get back in school, help them withdraw the charges but still not letting them have a different group of friend or meet other people, so it's just hard. I don't know how we are going to do that, we are trying to figure that out. So that to me is the biggest challenge.

### Community Connections and Involvement for RISE Participants

As part of youth mentoring, youth also outlined how they were able to foster community connections and increase their involvement in the community based on RISE program participation. One youth spoke of how because of the positive relationship he established with a staff member, helped him increase his awareness and opportunities within the community:

More programs, more community centres I go to now in my area are thanks to him [staff]. He put me out there and now I have a lot of connections in the community, any time I need help, I can go and reach out to the community centres and they'll help me.

Another thing I participated in was a clothing drive, and I had to organize and sell clothes; I like that because I like being part of the community and giving back like that.

After I finish school, I just came back and got to volunteer cooking.

When I was doing my hours, I was helping kids with their homework and that was fun because I got to see like what the, what kids knew and what I could teach them and I was able to teach them stuff they didn't know and help.

I have some pretty good connections now. Life is all about good connections and they're always there for us.

With the community, like being involved with RISE, I have a better connection with the community because I don't have to speak to someone higher up like directly, I can come here and have someone speak for me, and represent me from a higher position.

Finally, staff discussed how providing different community connections was beneficial for youth, but also gave them an opportunity to showcase their talents:

So together we started Rising Researchers with the same Youth Justice clients. We started a clothing drive, where everyone went out into the community, donated clothes and we gave it back to everyone for free. So we had a drive and then we had some of the youth who were into the music and the studio program perform that day.

**Table 11.** Items and responses from youth who completed the questionnaire (n = 21) related to their perceptions of personal impacts pertaining to health and wellness based on involvement in RISE programming.

My experiences in the program have...	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
Increased the likelihood that I would ask for help for a mental or physical problem	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)
Helped me be less aggressive with others (verbally and/or physically)	0 (0%)	7 (35%)	13 (65%)
Increased my knowledge of risky behaviours (e.g., risky driving, substance use, violence, and unsafe sexual behaviours)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	15 (75%)

### Personal Impacts, Health and Wellness

Personal impacts, health and wellness were also identified as important outcomes for youth involved in RISE programming. Three indicators were used to measure this outcome: improved emotional regulation, increased knowledge of risky behaviours, and reduced involvement in gang/criminal activities. Youth were asked about how program participation impacted them personally, including their health and wellness, related to emotional regulation, knowledge of risky behaviours, reduction in gang/criminal activities. The results are presented above in Table 11. Additional graphs depicting the evaluation results are provided in Appendix F.

Findings from the questionnaire indicated that youth’s criminal activity and involvement declined since engagement in RISE, as 59% of the sub-sample outlined that they had not re-offended since enrolling the RISE program. Further, 68% of youth identified that they were no longer involved in gang/criminal activity. These findings are illustrated in the two figures on the right (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

Moreover, 65% of youth spoke of how the program helped them become less aggressive with others and increased their knowledge about risky behaviours. Further, 55% of youth spoke about how the program increased their likelihood to ask for help related to a physical or mental problem. Such findings are further reinforced by youth and staff quotations.

**Figure 4.** Youth’s responses of whether they have reoffended since enrolling in the RISE program (n= 17).



**Figure 5.** Youth’s responses of whether they are still involved in gang and/or criminal-related activities (n= 19).



During the focus group, staff spoke of the opportunities provided to youth if they are struggling with substance abuse problems:

Another one is the one if they have an abuse, substance use problems, then we will get another organization to come and help us understand that. Even if it is mental issue they are having.

The substance abuse programs [YMCA and St. Stephen's] come in. We have a partner[ship] with them, so when certain youth have substance abuse problems we tend to refer them to her and then they do a separate program outside of this space.

We do work with St. Stephens. They come here once a week and they do workshops and mostly for job building and they have a tailored program for youth who have conflict with the law because sometimes barriers are with being charged you might not be able to just go and apply at a Walmart for example. So they have a program which we connect with.

One youth outlined that he used this service provided by RISE:

I use the substance abuse program...That's the only program I'm in. I like the advice that the person advises you, you know, how to be better, not to abuse substances and everything.

The supportive environment provided by program staff was critical in helping to foster personal development, as participants spoke about reduction in criminal activity and development of life skills:

I didn't know how to deal with these charges, but he every time he kept telling me 'relax it's okay, there's always a way around everything', and he told me, 'you know, keep moving forward, don't put yourself down', and then that switched my point of view and now thanks to him, I'm not getting no charges, you know, as I was doing previous, before, and ya so now my point of view is different now, my personality got better, now I'm not kinda shy I can talk to people, you know.. I'm

not the type of person who comes sit down with people and everything, but thanks to [staff] slowly every time putting me in other programs, other people that help me sort, other resources that helps me, so thanks to him now I'm, my point of view in life is kinda different now.

RISE impacted me because it changed me a lot. When I was here, I was like kind of in a bad position, I was doing a lot of bad stuff, like I got arrested three times, and I was dealing with all of those charges, and now, all my charges are going, I have two things in court right now and they're going to be dropped soon, and now I'm going up a good path to find a job and so thanks to For Youth Initiative for helping youth like with everything slowly by slowly.

One staff, who lives in the community where he works, spoke of the reduction in crime rate because of the program:

Because of what I have seen because of this RISE program, the crime in this areas, especially with the guns, has come down tremendously and you know that was echoed in front of the chief of police by the 12 division.

Staff also spoke of how they've been trying to use the program as a safe and supportive environment to encourage youth to express and showcase their talents:

They are all doing so well and want to do well. They all have so many talents, some of them are shy some of them it might take them two months before they tell me they sing, before I put them into the studio, for example or even taking part in Rising Researchers. For example, another youth is very articulate and smart but said he doesn't talk because he doesn't want people to think he's smart because he might be judged. So it's just empowering them making sure its ok, everyone has their talents and what they are good at, they just don't know how to exercise themselves. Realizing that every single one has something good to offer, they just may not even know it themselves, but seeing them, it could be anything.



They're all capable of doing better and they can I just don't think they ever had access to any opportunity so having this FYI here is letting them realize 'oh I can do this' or I can be better...

Although skills around emotional regulation were identified as a main program outcome, youth and staff also spoke about how engagement in the program and interactions with program staff helped with the development a number of other life skills including communication, responsibility and decision-making, overcoming obstacles, and assertiveness.

I realized that everyone here is friendly and everyone here isn't just doing their job and, and, like having me do hours, they're here to help me with my hours and not just my hours done but learn like help me learn from doing my hours, like learn new things and help me gain skills and stuff like that.... I wasn't just doing hours and I wasn't just working, like they were teaching me new skills and helping me communicate and teaching me a lot of stuff I didn't know.

## Responsibility and Decision Making

How did it impact my daily life? Like a lot of times when I'm making decisions, I now have stuff that I've heard from people at For Youth Initiative and I remember some of things they said and it helps me in making my decisions, it helps me stay on track and a lot of stuff that impacts my daily life.

It is still a work in progress, but for the most part they are all able to acknowledge what they have done is wrong, so it's just giving them support need to make sure they will continue to make right decisions. We understand that once they leave the space, making the right decisions is going to be a lot harder, so it's just helping them, supporting them as much as we can, so they continue down the path. (Staff)

It helped me obviously make responsible choices of course, because if I didn't, obviously I did not make responsible choices earlier so I wouldn't be in this type of situation, so obviously they helped me make responsible choices and to better myself, and always

look at it on a two different point of view, how like [staff] said, 'the outcome of the situation, no don't jump to conclusions right away right? Take in the situation, look what the outcome might be and is it for the better or for the worst, right?' So ya, so now I know how to make better responsible choices.

They enhanced my awareness of my life choices, and they basically showed me ways to make choices, to not make the wrong choices...They'll say, if something happens, 'don't make a choice right away, it's okay to like think about it, think about the outcomes, which way, what will happen after, and then make your choice'. It's not always okay this is good for me right now, do this right now, you have to think about what you really want, not, what you really need, not what you want. So it's always on my mind, to think about it.

The program has impacted me by making responsible choices because its showed me what, how I'd make a bad choice, how it would affect me negatively, and also [staff] was showing me that too that a lot of this stuff I'm in now, even though that some of the stuff might get like taken off my record, and but stuff still like lasts and if I get charged, if I get convicted for something, even though I'm 18, it, it shouldn't be; it'll still show up and stuff like that, and then it can really affect me negatively in my future. So by being informed of that stuff, like stuff I didn't know before and I thought everything was okay, now that I know that, I'm good with right decisions.

The relationships I developed with the staff made me think about if I'm about to do something bad, is it worth it, or, is it the right thing to do.

How to save, how to save money, when I, when I get paid from my job, and how to make better decisions in life.

## Overcoming Obstacles

It helped me become aware of what's going on around me and helps me to go into a better path and learn about obstacles that I'm going to face, being young and being a minority...and how to come around those obstacles and rise above people's expectations.

[I learned] actually who your friends are, who you surround yourself around, that would be the one best advice. So you know, whoever you surround yourself around with is the way society looks at you, you hang around with bad people and you're a good person yourself, society will still look at you as a bad person because of the people around you, right? So always watch out, always surround yourself around people that want you to do better, want you to succeed right? So someone who's in my shoes, if I could give them any advice taking this program, it's that.

## Assertiveness

Don't be hesitant to ask questions, don't be scared of the people working here because they're all very friendly and to listen to what they have to say because what they have to say is like really important and it will really help you.

# Recommendations

The recommendations section is divided into three sections. First, specific program recommendations are outlined by program staff and youth participants based on responses gathered from the questionnaires and focus groups. Second, based on all evaluation findings gathered to date, recommendations for future RISE programming are discussed. Finally, as ongoing evaluation is critical for ongoing improvement within youth programming, evaluation recommendations are made for future RISE programming.

## Recommendations from Youth and Staff

The majority of youth outlined that they did not have a least favourite aspect of RISE programming (9; e.g., “No, it’s perfect program”, “Nothing’s perfect, but it’s as good as it can be.”, “I don’t think anything can be improved because I feel like it’s already good as it is, and I don’t know what to recommend for the R.I.S.E program.”). Others outlined they did not enjoy group talks (1), the temperature of the studio room (1), the food (1), having to come early (1), and not being able to teach or show different avenues to grow (1).

Youth’s recommendations centred around providing additional opportunities for youth to showcase their talents (e.g., music performances), improve the condition and increase the size of the studio room (e.g., “I like the studio, I would improve the size, it’s kinda small and crowded, but other than that, the studio is really good”; “air conditioning as it gets hot in there”). Youth also requested an increase in programming, including more music programs and camping.

Staff recommendations centred around program expansion to other locations, expand collaborations with other organizations in order to better support youth and help divide the workload, increase funding related to more staff, additional training (e.g., how to support youth in court), additional honourariums for youth to increase the incentive for participation.

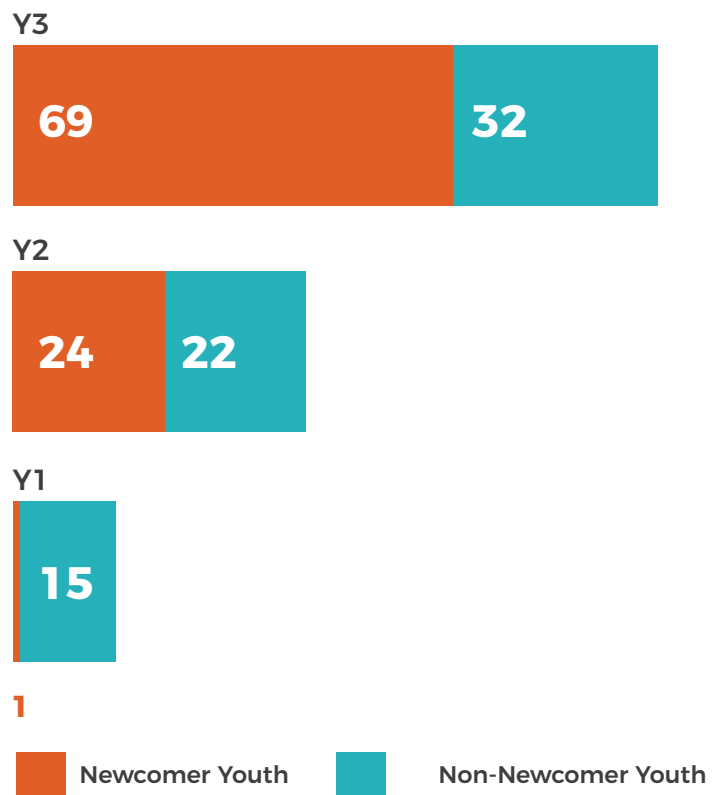
## Recommendations for Future RISE Programming

Results from the process and outcomes evaluation within Phase 3, coupled within findings from evaluation work in Phase 1 and 2, help to understand and demonstrate the nature of change that RISE program participants have experienced. The following section outlines recommendations for future RISE programming that are informed by the comprehensive evaluation conducted over the past 2 years (July 2015 – June 2017).

### 1. Adapt to Changing Demographics of RISE Youth Participants

A close review of the demographic characteristics of RISE participants indicates that the youth who identify as “newcomer youth” by 48% in Year 2 from Year 1. In Year 2, 52% of participants identified as newcomer youth. In Year 3, this number increase further to 68% of participants outlining 16% increase of newcomer youth from Year 2 to Year 3 (see Figure 6 below).

**Figure 6.** Newcomer youth vs. non-newcomer youth served over three years of RISE programming.



Although RISE (and FYI) is familiar with working with marginalized populations, having a larger than expected subset of newcomer youth and their families presents new challenges and requires RISE's approach to programming, intervention and support to be modified and adapted.

Within Phase 2 of the evaluation, RISE staff reported that newcomer youth experienced difficulty integrating into a new school system, lacked understanding of Canadian culture and processes and struggled to engage in their new environment. Likewise, the parents/guardians of new-comer youth also struggled to find employment; arriving new to Canada they often had little to no familial or community support and a poor understanding of the Canadian education and criminal system. From these previously identified challenges, and evidence that this demographic of RISE participants, continues to change, it is critical to ensure resources and supports are in place so youth and their families do not get lost in the system.

RISE staff should continue to address the influx of newcomer youth by offering both youth and their parents the following supports:

#### **Newcomer Youth**

- Support to understand Canadian education and justice systems
- Education: understanding law and activities that can be seen as criminal offence
- Employment support: how to obtain a job in Canada, what taxes mean, how to save, opening a bank account, etc.
- Introduction to and opportunities to meet and mingle with other youth through peer mentoring supports

#### **Parents of Newcomer Youth**

- Provide guidance in understanding Canadian culture and raising children in Canada
- Support parents/guardians to navigate the legal system and provide support to their children
- Connect parents with newcomer services for adults and families that can provide immigration related supports

While the expected outcomes for youth that participate in RISE are similar for newcomer youth (i.e. increased educational achievement, legal and employment supports, improved family well-being, reduction in social isolation), there are additional outcomes for newcomer youth that RISE programming aimed to target for newcomer youth participants, which include the successful integration into the local community and culture. Future RISE program evaluation will examine the success of this outcome.

### **2. Increase attendance and engagement in RISE programming**

A challenge identified by staff was the attendance and engagement in youth programming at RISE. This was further supported by the program documentation records and responses from the youth-completed questionnaires which outlined that despite having high participation in the studio and homework and tutoring programs, there was low involvement in RISE programming (i.e. girls' leadership, food and nutrition). Therefore, speaking with youth to understand what they would like to have as part of the programs to understand how to engage more youth in the leadership and civic engagement, girls' leadership, food and nutrition, and youth ambassador leadership programs would be beneficial. This will also allow opportunities for youth input and voice, which is critical in supporting youth.

One strategy that was previously outlined by program staff was the use of honourariums as incentives for program participation. Perhaps this is an avenue that can be further explored for future programming.

### **3. Increase connections with mentors in the community for youth to be able to establish education and employment connections**

Despite increasing youth's outcomes related to education and employment, RISE program staff can work to provide opportunities for more youth to work with a mentor within the workforce, as only 34% of youth were working with a mentor in 2017.

This can be done through expanding collaborations with organizations to help youth become better prepared for

employment preparation and help program staff with the heavy work load and challenge related to managing time, as it will allow for opportunities to share the workload between staff and community partners. By expanding these connections within the community, RISE staff and mentors may help youth become more of placement and networking opportunities, and narrowing down career goals.

These connections should also include stakeholders within the school system to ensure youth have the necessary supports in place to guide them during their high school experience (e.g., course selection, opportunities to engage in school teams/clubs), as well as prepare them for and work that align with their life goals (e.g., attending post-secondary school, apprenticeship, employment).

#### **4. Involve parents in academic engagement and employment preparation program activities**

Few youth perceived that their parents and/or guardians showed interest in their life related to future career and education plans, yet findings from this evaluation reinforce that youth value their parents' and/or guardians' opinions. RISE programming can provide further opportunities for parent and/or guardian involvement through information sessions, workshops, or introducing a youth to a community mentor, as there is value for parents to be involved in programming and in their child's life.

#### **5. Incorporate youth voice and input into organizational decision-making**

Staff spoke of trying to incorporate youth voice into the program, yet no youth spoke about having an opportunity to do so within the focus group. As such, more can be done to involve youth in the process for program decision-making, even if it is only as consultation. Incorporating youth input into the organizational decision-making process may increase their level of accountability to the program while empowering the youth to make decisions and have their voices heard. This could include gaining youth input related to what particular programs they want, what topics they want to cover in the mentoring sessions, etc.

#### **6. Include more leadership and mentoring opportunities for youth**

Evident from the interviews that the program fostered a safe and supportive environment, to further build youth's social and leadership skills, it is recommended for mentors to provide more intentional opportunities for youth to practice and develop leadership skills

Providing youth with small roles or responsibilities may help to increase opportunities for leadership (e.g., helping with snack, working on homework with a younger RISE youth).

#### **7. Create intentional opportunities for life skill development and life skill transfer**

Previous research stresses the importance of intentionally teaching life skills as this fosters greater likelihood that youth are able to transfer. Therefore, integrating the opportunities for youth development has become common within youth programming. Integrating and discussing life skills such as emotional regulation, goal setting, communication, overcoming obstacles are beneficial for youth's psychosocial development. It was evident from this evaluation that youth feel they are developing life skills. However, it is critical for program staff to communicate to youth how such skills can be applied and translated to other life contexts beyond the program (e.g., school, home, work, peer group, community).

One of the program goals was to improve emotional regulation; however, no youth spoke of how this skill had been improved from program participation. Further, no staff spoke of how this was intentionally targeted in programming. Therefore, it is important to understand that some life skills are more inherently developed through engaging in a program (e.g., communication); however certain skills need to be more intentionally taught in order to be developed by youth (e.g., emotional regulation). Integrating these skills into a program requires staff to not only discuss how these skills are important in the context of the program, but also how these skills can be applied beyond, such as at school, with friends, at work.

Having a debrief at the end of program sessions could be used to explicitly discuss how what was learned in the program session can be applied in other areas of their lives (explicit life skill transfer). This is pertinent in current research literature, indicating that when there are intentional and deliberate opportunities for life skill transfer, youth are more likely to develop life skills. In order for youth to gain the confidence and awareness necessary to successfully transfer their skills, staff must have a deliberate approach by providing concrete examples throughout the sessions of how skills can be applied beyond the RISE.

For example, improved emotional regulation was a proposed outcome of RISE programming yet no youth spoke about fostering this skill. As such, this may be a skill that a more intentional approach needs to be taken when working with youth. When discussing the importance of managing emotions (e.g., relaxation techniques, anger management), staff can emphasize how these skills are critical to function in other life domains. By including tangible examples that apply to home or the classroom (e.g., before a math test or before a job interview, take three deep breaths), youth's awareness of the contexts in which they can apply their skills can be increased.

### **8. Provide additional staff training**

Based on the process and evaluation findings, additional training related to strategies for working with newcomer youth, attending court, life skill development (how to intentionally integrate life skills into RISE programming), communication with parents and youth, and time management may be worthwhile for staff.

# Recommendations for Future RISE Evaluation

## Challenges and Barriers to Evaluation

### 1. Respondents

The survey respondents of this program evaluation were not a representative sample of the RISE program's service-users. Although the evaluation aimed to acquire feedback from active and inactive participants, the majority of respondents were active participants. Thus, the responses may not be reflective of all past and current participants from the 101 youth who have been involved in RISE programming. Additionally, surveys questions should be relevant to the specific sample of respondents.

### 2. Sample size

It is recommended that in order to gather a more holistic understanding of service-users' experiences, the sample size of program evaluation respondents should be higher. In other words, the evaluation should seek to gather feedback from more youth participants.

## Evaluation Recommendations

### 1. Respondents and sample size

In future evaluations, it is recommended that strategies be utilized to attain a larger sample size of participants at the qualitative (interview, focus group) and quantitative (questionnaire) levels that are representative of program participants (i.e., past and current).

**Strategies:** Offer honorariums and/or food (i.e., group meal or snack) as incentives for participation in the evaluation.

### 2. Youth-facilitated evaluation

For continuous ongoing program evaluation and inclusion of youth in programming planning, it is recommended that evaluation strategies are incorporated into program activities. For example, focus groups discussing aspects of programming that the youth enjoy, impacts of their program experiences, and recommendations for identified challenges, could occur and be audio-recorded during group meals or snack. This will

allow the youth to provide their input in a comfortable setting, without drastically changing the program model. Furthermore, involving youth in evaluation activities (e.g., focus group co-facilitation) helps build organizational evaluation culture while providing skill-building opportunities to youth.

### 3. Attain input from all stakeholders

In future evaluations, it is recommended that feedback be attained from all stakeholders including youth, program staff, parents, and community mentors as each stakeholder has relevant insight into program processes and outcomes. Suggestions are made below on how to do this.

### 4. Data sources and methods

As there are program outcomes associated with parents/guardians, it is recommended these individuals should also be involved in the evaluation of program processes and impacts. Parents/guardians can also complete a similar questionnaire to what the youth completed or can engage in an interview in order to provide their perceptions of the influence and/or impact of RISE programming on their child and any perceived changes in their relationship. Additionally, parental perceptions can provide insight into the youth's actions and development while at home. This will help provide a more holistic view of skill development both in and outside of RISE programming. Additionally, engaging parents/guardians in interviews or focus groups can help understand how is best to engage them in programming as this is an important program goal, yet still remains a challenge.

Further, in addition to parents as additional evaluation sources, there is value in attaining feedback and insight from external mentors. This can also be done using quantitative (questionnaire) or qualitative (focus groups, interviews) methods. Finally, staff can complete a monitoring form on a regular basis (i.e., weekly, monthly) which helps to understand the processes of program delivery, including if the program session was delivered as planned, how the program was delivered, successes and challenges of program delivery, attendance, etc.). Further, there is value in assessing the one-on-one sessions with youth as this is predominant program component. Scaling measures are quick and easy to complete and can be done by staff and/or youth.

## 5. Build evaluation into regular programming.

The importance of building in evaluation into regular programming is critical as programmers can learn from evaluation findings. Similar to the workshop evaluations, additional evaluation methods can be used within each program stream of RISE. This will allow for ongoing learning and the ability to integrate findings to improve future programming. Regular evaluation and assessment of practices, particularly at the process level reinforces the importance of ensuring the program is meeting participants' and the programs' goals and objectives.

For example, evaluation can be built into regular programming to specifically work with newcomer youth and/or their parents/guardians to see if their needs are being met through the RISE program through interviews, focus groups or questionnaires. Program staff can adapt their programming and can build from these findings to implement strategies and ensure resources are in place to support the youth and their families.

## Conclusion

The evaluation conducted on FYI's RISE program revealed insightful and informative results. Although some program challenges emerged related to the value for additional training and connections in the community related to employment preparation, youth and staff described having positive program experiences and outcomes. Youth reported enjoying the different opportunities provided at RISE, and appreciating the program staff's ongoing support, particularly around their needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Youth articulated that staff not only provided essential day-to-day supports and structure, but also emotional support; something not always available to youth.

Additionally, youth discussed how the opportunities offered at RISE have increased their academic engagement, aided with employment preparation, increased family support and communication between them and their parents and/or guardians, increased mentoring opportunities, and improved abilities pertaining to communication, decision making, and reduced criminal involvement/gang-related activities.

In conclusion, the program evaluation conducted on RISE yielded insightful findings that can be used to better understand the program and service-users and to improve program-delivery. Additionally, the evaluation produced important program and evaluation recommendations that can be used to enhance future programming and evaluation.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Evaluation Work Plan

Milestones	Deadline
<b>Phase One: Year One Review</b>	
1. Review of year one reports	Completed
2. Development of tools: workshop evaluation form, pre and post survey, survey for youth sector stakeholders and interview guide	Ongoing
3. Submit ethics application to York University Research Ethics Board	Completed
<b>Phase Two: Process Evaluation</b>	
1. Document review and thematic analysis of Management Information System	Completed
2. Meetings with RISE Staff	Completed
<b>Phase Three: Outcome Evaluation</b>	
1. Survey (Youth, Parents, Staff, Tutors, Partners)	Youth (Completed) Parents, Staff, Tutors, Partners (Ongoing)
2. Group Mentorship Session Questionnaire	Completed
3. Face-to-face Interviews (Youth, Parents, Mentor)	Youth (Completed) Parents and Mentors (Ongoing)
4. Focus Group with Stakeholders	Planned for future evaluation
5. Partnership (External Mentors) Optional Interviews	Planned for future evaluation
6. On-line post survey for Partner groups (External Mentors)	Planned for future evaluation
<b>Phase Four: Putting It Together</b>	
1. Interim Evaluation Report with recommendations and findings	Completed
2. Final Evaluation Report with recommendations and findings	Completed
3. Dissemination of lessons from the evaluation	Ongoing

# APPENDIX B

## Re-Integrating the Socially Excluded (R.I.S.E.) Logic Model

### LOGIC MODEL



Date: January 2016    Status: Final    Contributors: Zainab Godwin, Emily Alston-O'Connor, Tina Sahay

**PROGRAM:** For Youth Initiative- RISE (Re-integrating the Socially Excluded)

**SITUATION:** There is growing resentment and isolation experienced by youth involved with the legal system in their communities, coupled with a lack of educational and employment opportunities.

**PRIORITIES:** Building youth leadership and de-isolation by increasing access to opportunities for marginalized youth in our community

INPUTS	OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES		
	Activities	Participation	Timelines for attainment of outcomes are individually-based		
FYI staff/case worker time, space, funding, mentorship, technical resources, partners, tutors, OCMS database	Academic Preparation Tutoring, workshops, case management, goal setting, credit recovery	Youth 12-17 yrs. in conflict with the law	Increased interest in school; Improved academic skills; Increased confidence in academic ability;	Increased school attendance; improved academic performance; Enhanced career path identification/post-sec pursuit (17 yr old only)	Increased academic/career success; Decreased social isolation; Decreased recidivism, Increased civic engagement, Improved family wellbeing
	Employment Preparation Skills development workshops, internship/job placements, business coaching, career mentoring, career mapping	Youth 16-17 yrs. in conflict with the law	Increased knowledge of employment opportunities; Improved soft skills; Increased awareness of networking and placement opportunities; Increased employability	Increase in gainful employment or placements	
	Family Support Parent workshops, meeting with youth's case lead, co-planning with youth, connecting with additional support systems	Parents of youth and youth	Increased parental understanding of youth issues; Improved communication between parents and youth	Increased involvement in youth's academic and employment planning, increased interest in RISE	
	One on One Mentoring Mentor recruitment and orientation, pairing of youth with corporate mentors, weekly mentoring, monthly group mentorship sessions, exposure to young professionals, engaging in social activities	Youth 12-17 in conflict with the law, mentors	Youth: Increased awareness of the benefits of volunteering; Improved social skills; Increased awareness of volunteer opportunities, school-based activities and clubs; Increased connections with community leaders;  Mentors: Increased social engagement with youth; increased understanding of their role and its impact	Youth: school activities and clubs; Expanded social connections, improved peer and adult relationships, increase in reciprocal mentorship Mentors: improved mentoring skills	

## APPENDIX C

### YOUTH-COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE

Please rate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your participation in For Youth Initiative's R.I.S.E program.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

#### Since participating in R.I.S.E., I ...

1. Have increased my interest in school  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
2. Get better grades in school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
3. Only miss school if I have a good reason (i.e., sick, doctor's appointment).  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
4. Feel like dropping out of school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
5. Am more motivated to go to school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
6. Am eager to do well in school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
7. Get discouraged about school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
8. Plan to go to college or university after high school.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

#### From participating in R.I.S.E., I ...

9. Became aware of possible jobs.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

10. Have improved how I manage my time and/or money.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. Have learned skills that have made me job-ready.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

12. Became aware of networking opportunities (e.g., Power of One, By For With Youth, networking events hosted by other employment organizations)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

13. Became aware of placement opportunities (e.g., employment skills training workshops, Smart Serve certification, CPR/first aid)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. Have increased my knowledge of employment opportunities

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Have improved my soft skills (i.e., communication, problem solving, decision making, time management, punctuality, team player)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

### **My experiences in the program have...**

16. Taught me valuable skills

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

17. Helped me to focus on specific career pathways that align to my life goals.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

18. Improved and expanded my job skills

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

19. Increased the number of professionals in my social network

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

20. Improved my attitudes toward others (e.g., my peers, kids, teachers, law enforcement)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

21. Helped me understand there are better ways to solve problems than fighting

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

22. Increased my knowledge of community supports/resources available to me (e.g., placement, internship, job opportunities)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

**Please rate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they relate to your participation in For Youth Initiative’s R.I.S.E program.**

23. My experiences in the program have improved the quality of my relationships with my parent(s) and/or guardians.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

24. My parents(s) and/or guardian(s) are interested in my life.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

25. I seek advice from my parents(s) and/or guardian(s) about school and/or employment.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

26. I value the opinion(s) of my parents(s) and/or guardian(s) about my future.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

27. My parents(s) and/or guardian(s) ask me what I want to do with my future.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

28. My parent (s) and/or guardian(s) attend workshops offered within RISE.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**For the following questions circle the response that best fits how you feel about the staff in R.I.S.E.:**

29. I felt that the staff provided us with choices and options.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

30. I felt understood by the staff.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

31. I was able to be open with the staff during the sessions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

32. The staff showed confidence in our abilities to do well.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

33. The staff helped us to really understand the goals of the session and what we need to do.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

34. The staff encouraged us to ask questions.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

35. I feel a lot of trust in our staff.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

36. The staff answered our questions fully and carefully.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

37. The staff handled our emotions very well.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

38. The staff tried to understand how we see things before suggesting new ways to do things.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

39. I felt that the staff liked us to do well.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

40. The staff made us feel like we are able to do the activities in the program.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

41. The staff encouraged us to work together.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

42. The staff had respect for us.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

43. The staff were interested in us.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**My experiences in the program have...**

44. Increased my awareness of the importance of volunteering.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

45. Allowed me to make new friends.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

46. Improved my support system (i.e., I now have mentors/adults in my life that I can trust).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

47. Motivated me to want to engage in school teams and/or clubs.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

48. Increased connections with community leaders.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**My experiences in the program have...**

49. Increased the likelihood that I would ask for help for a mental or physical problem.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

50. Helped me be less aggressive with others (verbally and/or physically).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

51. Increased my knowledge of risky behaviours (e.g., risky driving, substance use, violence, and unsafe sexual behaviours).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

52. Have you re-offended since enrolling in the RISE program?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

53. Are you still involved in gang/criminal activities?



## Demographics

### 1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Trans
- Two-Spirit
- Agender
- Gender Fluid
- Not listed (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

### 2. What is your age?

- 14 years old or younger
- 15 years old
- 16 years old
- 17 years old
- 18 years old
- 19 years old or older

### 3. How long have you been involved in RISE?

- Less than 3 months
- 3 to 6 months
- 7 months to 1 year
- More than 1 year, less than 2 years
- More than 2 years, less than 3 years

### 4. Race/Ethnicity

Racial groups are defined by race or colour only – not by country of birth, citizenship or religious affiliation. Which best describes how you identify? (pick all that apply):

- White/Caucasian
- Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
- South Asian (e.g., Afghan, East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino)
- Latin American

- East Asian (e.g., Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Laotian)
- Middle Eastern (e.g., Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, Lebanese)
- Black (e.g., African, Caribbean, North American)
- Not listed (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

**5. What staff have you worked with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What programs are you involved in at RISE?**

- Homework & Tutoring
- Studio
- Leadership & Civic Engagement
- Girls Leadership
- Food & Nutrition
- Youth Ambassador Leadership Program

**7. What are your favourite aspects of the program?**

**8. What are your least favourite aspects of the program?**

**9. How can the programs be improved?**

## Appendix D

# PROGRAM STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Introduction

I will like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion about your experiences with For Youth Initiative's (FYI) program, Re-Integrating the Socially Excluded (RISE).

I would like to ask your permission to record the session to make it easier for us to remember what we talked about but we guarantee confidentiality. The recording will be typed up but we will not use your real name.

Your responses are **confidential** and will only be seen by the Research Staff of YOUTHREX. FYI staff will not have access to the transcript of the interview. Your responses will only be shared in publications such as an evaluation report in a way that protects your confidentiality.

Our discussions today will focus on four areas:

- Section 1: Background of RISE Staff and Program
- Section 2: Describing the Process of Implementing RISE
- Section 3: Working with Youth; Families/Caregivers/Parents; and Partners/Organizations/Institutions
- Section 4: Assessing the Impacts of Workload and Changes in Program Structure
- Section 5: Outcomes of RISE
- Section 6: Closing Thoughts

Any questions? Are we ready to begin? Let's turn the recorder on.

## **Section 1: Background of RISE Staff and Program**

1. Can you tell me about your experience in working with youth and how you got involved with FYI?
2. Can you describe your current role at FYI as well as how it relates to R.I.S.E.?
3. Can you comment on the biggest challenges and opportunities working with youth in conflict with the law in Ontario and in the local community?
  - What are some of these challenges?
  - What are some of the opportunities?

## **Section 2: Describing the Process of Implementing RISE**

1. What do you, as a program staff, enjoy about implementing RISE?
2. Can you walk me through a typical one-on-one session?
3. Can you walk me through a typical group session?
4. Do you feel that some of the programs are more successful than others? Which ones? Why?
5. What were some successes that you have experienced in your work with RISE? Could you give me some examples of what went well?
6. What were some challenges that you encountered in your work with RISE? What sort of changes or supports would help you in working through these challenges?

## **Section 3: Working with Youth; Families/Caregivers/Parents, and Partners, Organizations; and Institutions**

### ***A) Working with Youth***

1. Can you describe how you engage with youth participants?
  - What are your relationships with youth like?
  - How often do you engage with them and through what means (i.e. In person/phone/text)?
2. What are some of the challenges or needs that you have observed in youth participants?
  - How does RISE help youth navigate these challenges?
3. What are some of the skills, abilities, values, talents, or positive relationships that you have observed in youth participants?
  - How does RISE do to help youth capitalize on these strengths?

### ***B) Working with Families/Caregivers/Parents***

1. Can you describe how you engage with families, caregivers, and parents?
  - What are your relationships with them like?
  - How often do you engage with them and through what means (ie. In person/phone/text)?

2. What are some of the challenges or needs that you have observed in families, caregivers, and parents?
  - How does RISE help youth navigate these challenges?
3. What are some of the skills, abilities, values, talents, or positive relationships that you have observed in parents, caregivers, and families in relation to youth?
  - How does RISE do to help families, caregivers, and parents capitalize on these strengths to support youth?

### **C) Working with Partners, Organizations, and Institutions**

1. Can you describe how you engage with community partners and other organizations or institutions that youth participants are involved with?
  - What are your relationships with them like?
  - How often do you engage with them?
2. Do youth face any challenges and/or barriers in their relationships with other organizations and institutions that they are involved with?
  - How does R.I.S.E. help youth navigate these challenges and/or barriers?
3. Can you describe some examples where R.I.S.E. was able to collaborate with external organizations and/or institution to support a youth?

### **Section 4: Assessing the Impacts of Workload and Changes in Program Structure**

1. How is the workload of R.I.S.E.? Did you feel it was appropriate?
  - Were the allocated hours for R.I.S.E. sufficient to carry out the program?
  - How was the participant to staff ratio for the R.I.S.E. program? Do you think it was appropriate?
  - Do you feel that you had adequate support from FYI?
2. How did the change from weekly to monthly sessions impact your work?
  - How did this impact change impact your workload?
  - Do you feel that that youth still received the appropriate level of supports with this change?
  - Were there any other program changes over the past few months? If so, what sort of impacts did these changes have for program participants as well as yourself?

### **Section 5: Outcomes of R.I.S.E.**

From your perspective as a program lead, how have you seen improvements or increases in the following outcomes in youth involved in R.I.S.E. programming?

1. Academic success?
2. Access to employment and career opportunities?
3. Get connected to mentors and friends?

4. Become involved in community projects and events?
5. Being able to make responsible choices?
6. Have stronger relationships with families, caregivers, and parents?
7. Making healthy life choices?

**Section 6: Closing Thoughts**

1. Is there anything else you would like to share?

***Thank you for your time and participation!***

## Appendix E

# YOUTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP

### Introduction

I will like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion about your experiences with For Youth Initiative's (FYI) program, Re-Integrating the Socially Excluded (RISE).

I would like to ask your permission to record the session to make it easier for us to remember what we talked about but we guarantee confidentiality. The recording will be typed up but we will not use your real name.

Your responses are **confidential** and will only be seen by the Research Staff of YOUTHREX. FYI and RISE staff will not have access to the transcript of the interview. Your responses will only be shared in publications such as an evaluation report in a way that protects your confidentiality.

Our discussions today will focus on four areas:

- Section 1: Introductions
- Section 2: Program Expectations
- Section 3: Program Experience
- Section 4: Relationships with Program Leads and Mentors
- Section 5: Outcomes of RISE
- Section 6: Closing Thoughts

Any questions? Are we ready to begin? Let's turn the recorder on.

### Section 1: Introductions

1. (Icebreaker- if time permits)
  - a. What's something in the next week that you are looking forward to?

### Section 2: Program Expectations

1. Tell me about your initial expectations coming into the program.
  - a. What were you expecting to do, learn, or accomplish in R.I.S.E.?
2. Thinking about your initial expectations, were they met? In what way?
  - a. What, if anything, did you not get out of the program that you were expecting to?

### Section 3: Program Experience

1. What of the following activities did you participate in? Which did you enjoy and why?
  - Tutoring; Mentoring; Group sessions Homework & Tutoring; Studio; Leadership & Civic Engagement; Girls Leadership; Food & Nutrition; Youth Ambassador Leadership Program

2. How was it like for you for your parents/caregivers/family's to also participate in R.I.S.E.?
  - Do you think this was helpful or not for you? In what ways?
3. How did you find the change from weekly sessions to monthly sessions?
  - Do you find this change to be helpful or unhelpful? How so?
4. What aspects of R.I.S.E. do you think can be improved?
  - What recommendations would you make?
5. What are some of the other programs that you participate in at FYI?
  - What do you like about them?
  - Are there any areas for improvement?

#### **Section 4: Relationships with Leads and Mentors**

1. Did you feel that you were able to connect with the program leads/staff?
  - How did you connect program leads/staff and how often? Was this level too much, too little, or just right?
  - How did your relationship with program leads/staff impact you in your everyday life?
  - What could be improved?
2. Were you able to connect with program staff through R.I.S.E.?
  - How did you connect mentors and how often? Was this level too much, too little, or just right?
  - How did your relationships with mentors impact you in your everyday life?
  - What could be improved?

#### **Section 5: Outcomes of R.I.S.E. participation**

1. What did you learn about yourself during the program?
2. Did you discover any interests that you didn't know you had?
3. How do you feel the program has impacted your:
  - Interest and ability to attend school?
  - Knowledge of and access to employment opportunities?
  - Social networks?
  - Connections to mentors and friends?
  - Involvement in community projects and events?
  - Ability to make responsible choices?
  - Relationships with families, caregivers, and parents?
  - Healthy life choices?
4. How has RISE impacted your relationships with your family/guardians?
  - Do you feel that working with R.I.S.E. has strengthened your relationships with your family/guardians?
  - Do you think your family/guardians have a better understanding of issues that are important to you?



5. Do you feel that you've built relationships with peers and mentors through participating with R.I.S.E./FYI?
  - If so, do you think you will/do you currently hang out with the people you met at R.I.S.E. outside of the programs?
  - How do you think these relationships that you have built in the program impact you in daily life?

**Section 6: Closing Questions**

1. If you could give one piece of advice to future program participants, what would it be?
2. If you could give one piece of advice to program planners, what would it be?
3. Would you recommend this program to your friends?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share?

***Thank you so much for your time and participation!***

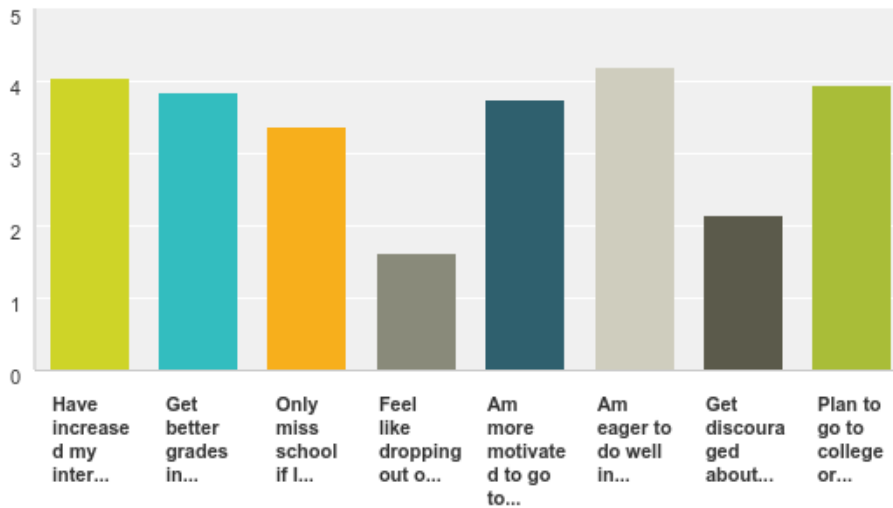
## Appendix F

# Graphical Representation of Outcome Evaluation Findings from the Youth-Completed Questionnaire

### Academic Engagement and Achievement

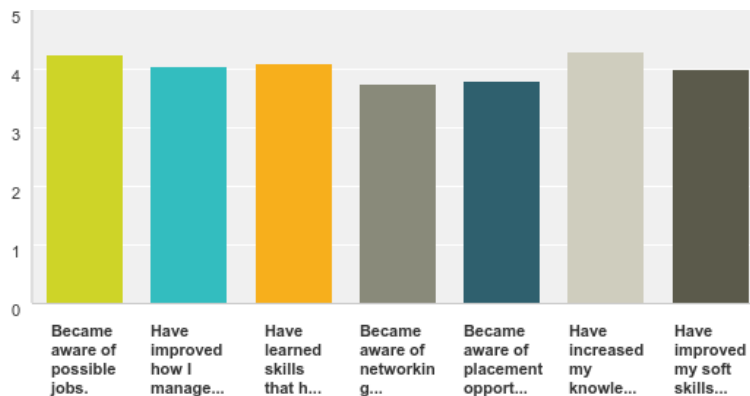
#### Since participating in RISE, I ...

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



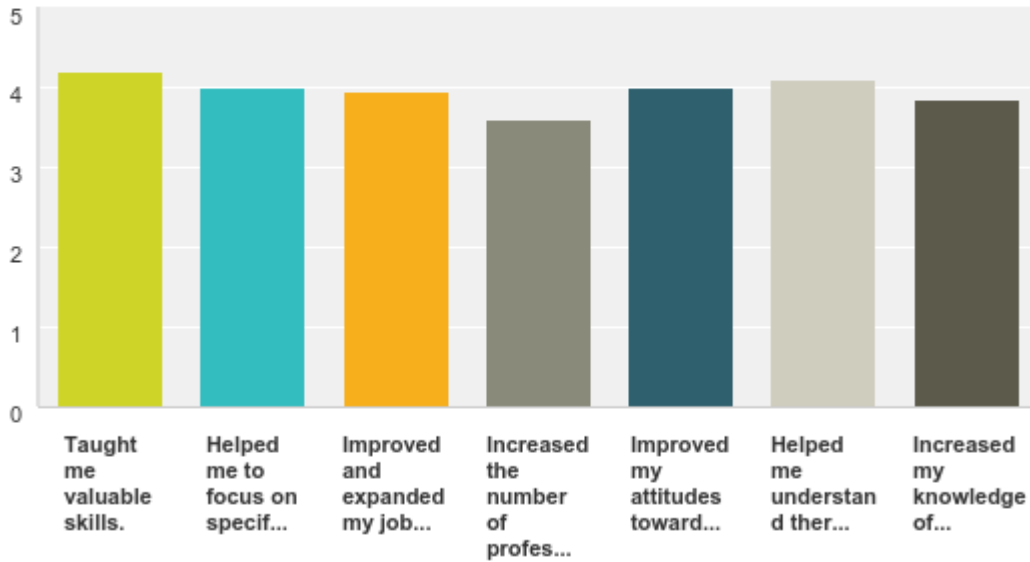
### Employment Preparation

#### From participating in this program, I...



### Q3 My experiences in the program have...

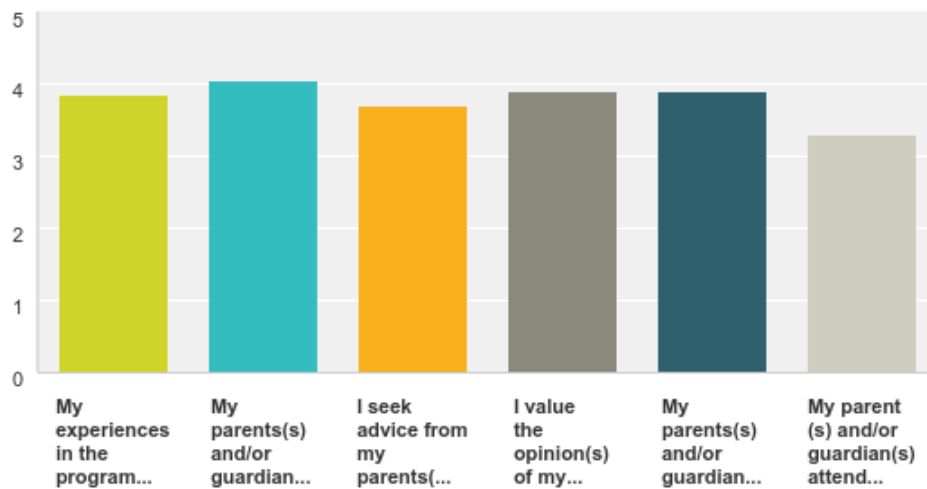
Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



### Family Support

Please rate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

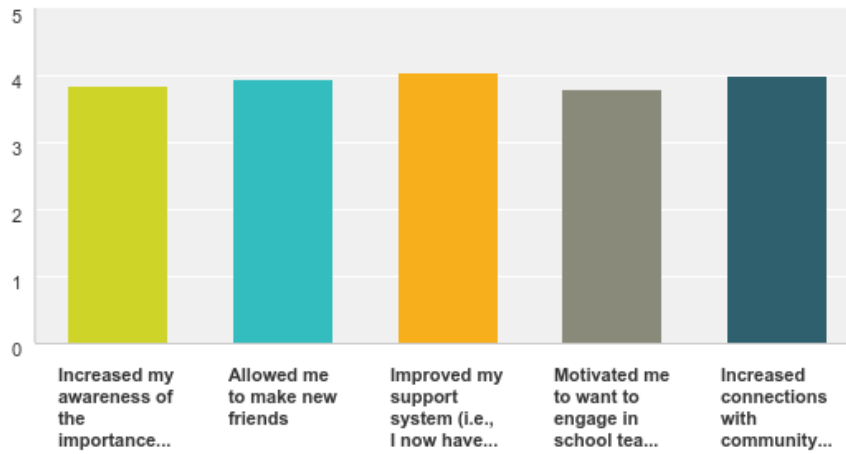
Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



## Youth Mentoring

Please rate the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. My experiences in the program have...

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



## Personal impacts, health and wellness