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THE CROSSOVER YOUTH PRACTICE MODEL (CYPM)

*CYPM in Brief: Research Supports Model's
Effectiveness in Improving Outcomes for Youth*

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Introduction

The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy developed the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM or Model) to improve outcomes for youth who are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The term "crossover youth" refers to system-involved youth who have experienced some form of abuse or neglect and who engage in delinquent behaviors regardless of the depth of their involvement in these systems.

The CYPM explains both why and how youth who have suffered abuse or neglect more frequently engage in delinquent behavior, and offers ways to interrupt this phenomenon. It also provides methods to better address the needs of youth known to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems as a result of this maltreatment and delinquent behavior. The CYPM encourages specific policies and practices to advance a research-based approach for child welfare, juvenile justice, and related agencies and partners to support the needs of crossover youth and their transitions to adulthood. Knowing that the child welfare and juvenile justice systems serve different functions, the Model promotes inter-agency collaboration that prioritizes multi-disciplinary teaming and information-sharing processes, utilization of evidence-based practices, youth and family engagement, commitment to fairness and equity, staff training, and data collection and analysis.

A number of recent studies have evaluated the CYPM, contributing to the growing body of evidence around the effectiveness of the Model. The studies reviewed in this update include:

1. *"Implementing the Crossover Youth Practice Model in diverse contexts: Child welfare and juvenile justice professionals' experiences of multisystem collaborations,"* written by Wendy Haight, Laurel Bidwell, Jane Marie Marshall, and Parmananda Khatiwoda at the University of Minnesota in 2014.
2. *"An evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM): Recidivism outcomes for maltreated youth involved in the juvenile justice system,"* written by Wendy Haight, Laurel Bidwell, Won Seok Choi, and Minhae Cho at the University of Minnesota in 2016.
3. *"The Importance of Interagency Collaboration for Crossover Youth: A Research Note,"* written by Emily Wright, Ryan Spohn, and Joselyne Chenane, and Nick Juliano at the University of Nebraska Omaha in 2016.
4. *"Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!),"* written by Emily Wright, Ryan Spohn, and Joselyne Chenane at the University of Nebraska Omaha in 2017.
5. California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) completed a rigorous assessment of the CYPM in 2018 and gave the CYPM a rating of "3 - Promising Research Evidence."

This research update summarizes the major findings of each study and explores the implications for the future of the CYPM therein.

“Implementing the Crossover Youth Practice Model in Diverse Contexts”

In 2014, researchers from the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota published an ethnographic study¹ in [Children and Youth Services Review](#). This two-year study investigated the Model’s ability to change jurisdictional culture, the challenges of implementation from the perspectives of various staff positions, and the extent to which “historical/cultural context” impacted implementation (Haight, Bidwell, Marshall, & Khatiwoda, 2014, 93).

One group of participants in the study had received formal training on the CYPM, including system personnel such as judges, attorneys, and corrections professionals. The study also

Researchers found that CYPM implementation provided a “framework that supported growth of the organization’s nascent practices and philosophies, as opposed to changing their practice/agency’s trajectory.”

included frontline staff who were familiar with the Model but had not participated in formal training, including child welfare workers and probation officers. All participants were employed in one of five diverse counties. Three of these counties were urban, with large human service systems and highly specialized staff. Only the leadership in these three counties received a full year of CYPM training. The remaining two counties were

smaller in population density. Therefore, system leadership and frontline staff were both included in CYPM training. The more populated counties were also more ethnically and racially diverse than the rural counties, although the rural counties were similarly economically diverse. Researchers collected data through observation at networking and training events, training record reviews, and individual 30-60 minute interviews. Through these extensive interviews, researchers studied observations on initial CYPM implementation and system change six months following full implementation.

Researchers found that CYPM implementation provided a “framework that supported growth of the organization’s nascent practices and philosophies, as opposed to changing their practice/agency’s trajectory” (Haight, et. al., 2014, 94). Most participants noted positive structural changes that enabled collaborating agencies to provide a wider range of targeted services to children and families, especially prevention efforts and psychosocial services. In addition, participants indicated a perceived change in the perceptions of system-involved youth and families, which increased their ability to “obtain a more holistic picture” (Haight, et. al., 2014, 95). The study also noted more effective communication across county departments. While there were challenges in the Model’s implementation, including, for example, the need for a “crossover professional” to coordinate across departments, overall data was positive (Haight, et. al., 2014, 95).

¹ An ethnographic study is qualitative in nature, where researchers become deeply involved in the systems and people they are researching. Ethnographic studies are usually lengthy to give researchers adequate time to observe, identify, and understand the implicit and explicit organizational and power structures at play.

The study found that in counties with smaller and more integrated divisions, “structural and psychosocial processes appeared mutually reinforcing of positive change” (Haight, et. al., 2014, 98). However, in counties with large administrative systems, particularly with strict division of responsibilities, CYPM implementation faced more challenges. In these counties, frontline staff had large caseloads but relatively few crossover youth and less CYPM training than their superiors. Thus, they were less likely to remember key components of the Model when they did encounter crossover youth. The study noted, “issues of communication and engagement with frontline workers may ultimately undermine the effectiveness of the CYPM to impact the lives of youth and families” (Haight, et. al., 2014, 98). Without adequate training, frontline staff in high population counties became disconnected from the CYPM core concepts. Conversely, rural counties, with less specialized staff roles, discovered more buy-in, collaboration, and ability to implement new protocols for children and families in the community.

This study was the first of its kind to evaluate the CYPM through the lens of professionals implementing the Model.² Of note, the study did *not* look at the effects of implementation on families and youth. Researchers found that challenges stemmed from historical/cultural context in jurisdictions, especially when staff did not receive adequate training on the Model’s procedures and goals. Ultimately, the study determined that the CYPM can be implemented successfully, particularly in tight-knit jurisdictions where frontline staff are involved in implementation procedure and decision-making.

“An Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM): Recidivism Outcomes for Maltreated Youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System”

In this 2016 study published in [Children and Youth Services Review](#), researchers from the University of Minnesota, St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas, and Chungbuk National University evaluated youth recidivism in a Midwestern county with and without CYPM implementation. The study compared multiple groups to control for time, geographic region, and a variety of other demographic factors, including:

- Youth outcomes in the county one year after CYPM implementation;
- Crossover youth data prior to CYPM implementation;
- Crossover youth data from nearby counties without CYPM implementation;
- Historical youth outcomes from nearby counties without CYPM implementation.

The researchers used anonymized data from a variety of jurisdictional and state resources to create a picture of historical and current trends, coding for specific offense levels and types. All youth in the study were between 10-17 years old and received at least one charge while they had an open child protection case.

² The study employed emic codes, which are used to study the perspectives of participants (rather than the perspectives of observers). Emic codes enable categorization and evaluation of subjective perspectives gathered from observation and interviews.

The study results showed a statistically significant decreased outcome of recidivism (one of the CYPM’s main goals) for youth in counties with CYPM, as compared to both historical groups and contemporaneous neighboring groups without CYPM. The researchers noted, “consistent with internal evaluations, as well as the perceptions of administrators and practitioners involved in the implementation of the CYPM in Oak County [pseudonym], we found that involvement in the CYPM reduced youth’s risks of recidivism” (Haight, Bidwell, Choi, & Cho, 2016, 83). The researchers hypothesized two possible reasons why recidivism was less likely for crossover youth in CYPM. First, this result may have occurred due to more direct and immediate access to services under CYPM, in conjunction with more accurate and swift identification of crossover youth through CYPM. Second, the levels of service between crossover and non-crossover youth under CYPM may be the same, but once identified, the crossover youth were diverted from juvenile justice to social services more often than non-crossover youth.

This study found that the “CYPM may be effective in disrupting negative developmental trajectories that could eventually lead to involvement in the adult criminal justice system” (Haight, et. al., 2016, 83). Of note, because the only available data included youth who already had involvement with both systems, this study cannot be used to evaluate the preventative goals of the CYPM (e.g., avoiding juvenile justice system involvement completely through diversion). However, this study highlighted the CYPM’s promising effectiveness in decreasing youth recidivism and invited further research to continue testing the Model’s effects.

“We found that involvement in the CYPM reduced youth’s risks of recidivism.”

“The Importance of Interagency Collaboration for Crossover Youth: A Research Note”

In 2014, researchers from the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska Omaha and from Father Flanagan’s Boys’ Home evaluated the experiences of Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare staff throughout CYPM implementation in a Midwestern county. The study used one-hour semi-structured³ interviews, observation of team meetings, and participation in informal discussions with various agency personnel.

First, researchers identified a few common challenges. System wide, differing philosophies on youth between juvenile justice and child welfare workers (and the subsequent perceptions they formed of each other) created tension. For example, some juvenile justice staff tended to see crossover youth as perpetrators who required detainment or rehabilitation, leading their child welfare colleagues to view them as punishment-oriented and “tough.” In contrast, child welfare workers, who often saw youth as victims requiring services, may have been viewed by juvenile justice officials as “soft” on youth and families. This tension, in combination with resource competition and frequent staff turnover, led to frustration between the two systems and potential breakdown of the CYPM. Next, the study noted that without a leader or CYPM office, the

³ Researchers asked 18 prepared questions and were able to continue asking additional questions to go deeper into areas of interest.

program’s mission, budget, and longevity was at constant risk, and CYPM implementation was “time consuming” and “draining” (Wright, Spohn, Chenane, & Juliano, 2016, 8). Though most people interviewed agreed on the merits of the Model, the energy required to implement it was viewed as challenging on both systems.

Second, the researchers identified implementation benefits. Notably, with increased information sharing and collaboration, decisions were more informed at every stage of the youth’s involvement. Interviewees reported enhanced appreciation of the youth’s “voice,” which helped guide decisions across both systems. Because key stakeholders met frequently with each other

This study identified the positive impact of interagency collaboration, including increased information sharing and relationships, better service delivery for youth and family, and increased commitment to the “mission” at hand.

and the youth, they drew on a holistic vision of the youth’s situation. In addition, this interaction increased personal relationships between job functions, enhancing trust and expanding interagency collaboration. Stronger relationships also helped the professionals stay committed to

preserving the Model. Communication increased instances of diversion, and with these results came decreased system caseloads and court time and expenses. Finally, those interviewed believed that the CYPM benefitted the youth and families it is meant to serve, resulting in a “longer time to recidivate, reduced severity of offenses, and less trauma and stigma to the youth” (Wright, et. al., 2016, 8).

The researchers made the following recommendations for successful CYPM implementation:

- Work within existing philosophical frameworks to understand challenges and complexities, and use commonalities to help bring the two systems together;
- Create manuals and implementation guides, lasting leadership positions, and succession-planning. Make crossover youth positions “desirable as long-term careers,” treating them as “specialty positions” to avoid high turnover (Wright, et. al., 2016, 9); and
- Make crossover caseloads specific and manageable for a specialized case worker.

The study concluded that jurisdictions should provide the adequate support, leadership, specialty positions, patience, and training for line staff to ensure long term CYPM success: “Our findings suggest that the challenges experienced in multisystem collaboration such as the CYPM are worth the effort when it comes to crossover youth” (Wright, et. al., 2016, 10).

“Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!)”

Researchers at the Nebraska Center for Justice Research at the University of Nebraska Omaha evaluated the CYPM (referred to as Youth Impact! (YI!)), in Douglas County, Nebraska. In their study, researchers reviewed the effectiveness of the CYPM in decreasing recidivism and increasing “prosocial outcomes” among crossover youth, as well as its impact on county-wide systems (Wright, Spohn, & Chenane, 2017b, 2). In addition, the researchers provided plausible

mechanisms for the program’s success, as well as a cost-benefit analysis of the implementation.

The study compared three groups:

- Children identified as crossover youth who were system-involved prior to YI! implementation, and therefore received no additional or modified services (hereinafter the “Control” group);
- Children identified as crossover youth after YI! implementation, but who for various reasons did not receive full YI! treatment (hereinafter the “CYPM Eligible” group) (Wright, et. al., 2017b, 2); and
- Crossover youth who received “full intervention” post-YI! implementation (hereinafter the “Treatment” group) (Wright, et. al., 2017b, 2). Youth in this group received a team/decision meeting, case plan, interagency meeting, and multidisciplinary meeting throughout their involvement.

The researchers concluded that YI! was effective in a variety of measures.⁴ Compared to the Control and CYPM Eligible groups, youth in the Treatment group were “significantly more likely to have their cases dismissed or not charged, receive informal diversion, and were less likely to be placed on probation, sent to congregate care/group home, or sent to a juvenile or adult correctional institution” (Wright, Spohn, & Chenane, 2017a, 8). Further, once identified as crossover youth, children in the Treatment group were more likely to “have their delinquency case closed within 9 months” of identification (Wright, et. al., 2017a, 8).

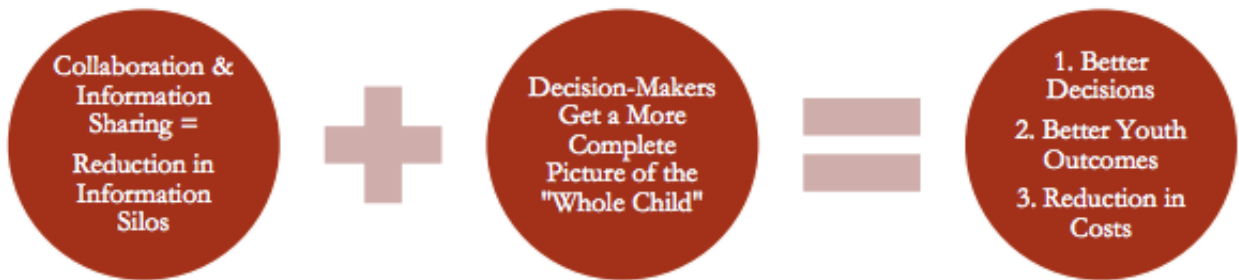


Figure 1. Reprinted from Wright et. al., 2017b, 3.

The recidivism outcomes were equally positive: fewer youth in the Treatment group received arrests nine months after identification, and those who did had fewer new arrests after identification. Those arrested were arrested for less serious or less violent crimes. The Treatment group also enjoyed longer periods of time before recidivating, as compared to the other groups. Finally, Treatment group youth had better living situations after identification, including fewer placements into congregant/group home or detention/correctional care from both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This group was far more likely to live at home with parents or kin caregivers (Wright, et. Al., 2017A, 12). Researchers also noted that Treatment group youth increased prosocial behavior at school and at home, including enhanced academic performance.

⁴ Additionally, researchers collected qualitative data from YI! staff on the program.

The researchers suggested that YI! was successful because of the increased information-sharing and collaboration between systems, breaking down “information silos,” which created a “better ‘whole picture’ of the youth’s situation” (Wright, et. al., 2017b, 3). This collaboration led to better youth-oriented decision-making. In addition, YI! was very cost-effective in Douglas County, resulting in a “net benefit of \$173,161 per year” (Wright, et. al., 2017b, 3). The costs of implementation, including data processing and staff training, were offset by cost-savings in court processing and probation use, further supporting the Model’s long-term viability.

Finally, YI! helped the Douglas County juvenile justice and child welfare systems come together, increasing workers’ trust, relationships, and communication

The CYPM helped juvenile justice and child welfare systems come together, increasing workers’ trust, relationships, and communication across the board.

across the board. This impact, in turn, has led to more precise and youth- and family-oriented decision-making. In all, this analysis provides evidence that the CYPM, as implemented in Douglas County, was effective in increasing diversion, decreasing recidivism, and enhancing collaboration among systems. The Model was shown to be cost-effective and “represents a ‘best practice’ for system integration and collaboration” (Wright, et. al., 2017b, 4).

CEBC Assessment and Rating

The [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#) is a leader in the identification, evaluation, and implementation of child welfare practices, focused on reviewing and disseminating information on the most successful evidence-based programs. The CEBC is a resource for agencies and individuals choosing and implementing promising child welfare programs. These programs are designed to increase safety, permanency, engagement, and general wellbeing for children and their families (CEBC, n.d).

CEBC Evaluation Process

Once a topic area is assigned and reviewed by a topic expert, the CEBC selects programs for assessment. Chosen programs are screened to clarify goals, leadership and management, and viability of training. The CEBC then completes a literature review to identify peer-reviewed publications on the program. To be eligible, the program must be included in at least one published report in a peer-reviewed journal. It is then rated on the CEBC’s Scientific Rating Scale and given a Relevance Level. The relevance is not a rating, and it is meant to help determine the types of outcomes the program generates.

The CYPM was evaluated in the Casework Practice Topic Area in 2018 on its relevance to child welfare professionals working with child welfare youth who are concurrently involved in the juvenile justice system. The CEBC reviewed the CYPM’s goals and highlighted its “essential components,” which include seven key themes to implementation and practice elements.

Further, the CEBC identified the CYPM's recommended delivery, including intensity, duration, settings, and required resources. Importantly, the CEBC determined that CYPM has an adequate training guide and opportunities for formal training, which should take about 12-18 months to complete. In addition to CYPM-specific documentation, CEBC analyzed the peer-reviewed literature that has focused on the CYPM.⁵ More information on the CEBC review of the CYPM can be found here: <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/crossover-youth-practice-model-cypm/>.

Results of CYPM Assessment

In 2018, the CYPM received a rating of “3 - Promising Research Evidence” on the CEBC Scientific Rating Scale, designated as having “High” relevance to “Child/Family Well-Being Outcomes.” The Model received a 3 having met the following criteria:

- At least one study with a form of control group determines that the treatment group benefits over control group. This study is peer-reviewed and published;
- Measures for outcome success are “reliable and valid;”
- If more than one study has been published, the overall evidence must support benefits from the program;
- No data exists that suggests that “a risk of harm that: a) was probably caused by the treatment and b) the harm was severe or frequent;”
- No data exists suggesting that the Model harms those using it; and
- The program has documented training, such as a manual, that explains all administration information and implementation recommendations.

The CYPM rating was provisional for 60 days, after which it became an official rating. This rating is indicative of the CYPM's success in the field and supports the Model's application to child welfare practice.

⁵ Haight, W., Bidwell, L., Marshall, J., & Khatiwoda, P. (2014) Implementing the Crossover Youth Practice Model in diverse contexts: Child welfare and juvenile justice professionals' experiences of multisystem collaborations. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 39, 91-100; Koliivoski, K., Barnett, E., & Abbott, S. (2015) *The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) in brief: Out-of-home placements and crossover youth*. Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy; Wright, E. M., Spohn, R., & Chenane, J. L. (2017), *Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!) [Executive Summary]*. Omaha, NE: Nebraska Center for Justice Research, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2017.

As a result of this review, the CEBC designated the CYPM as having “Promising Research Evidence” with a rating of 3 and a relevance of “High” in the “Child/Family Well-Being” outcome category (see insert for more detail). This scientific rating is a prestigious distinction that further demonstrates the CYPM’s success and innovation in helping crossover youth and agencies with which they are involved. In order to continue improving the CYPM rating on the CEBC’s Scientific Rating Scale to “2 - Supported by Research Evidence” and “1 - Well-Supported by Research Evidence,” the highest rating, additional studies must evaluate the Model’s benefits. The CEBC rating can be adjusted upon review of additional peer-reviewed published literature on the Model, which can occur when another empirically-supported CYPM study is completed.

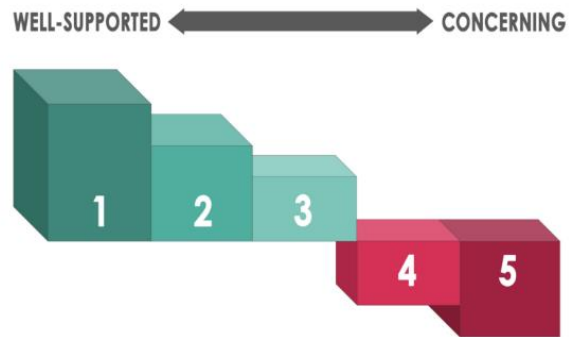


Figure 2. Reprinted from CEBC, 2018, www.cebc4cw.org

Conclusion

The CYPM has proven to be an effective model for improving outcomes for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as the communities in which they reside. The studies highlighted in this brief indicate that the Model is successful in the following areas:

1. **Providing a framework for child welfare and juvenile justice system culture change in multiple types of jurisdictions;**
2. **Enhancing communication across siloed departments and systems;**
3. **Creating a holistic view of youths’ individual situations, leading to more effective cross-systems case practice and decision-making;**
4. **Decreasing risks for recidivism and severity of future crimes committed, if any;**
5. **Improving both child welfare and juvenile justice indicators related to youth well-being and positive youth development; and**
6. **Yielding significant jurisdictional cost-savings.⁶**

While the Model sets the groundwork for essential cross-system collaboration and communication, its efficacy depends on whether it is implemented rigorously and as intended. As noted in these studies, successful adoption of the Model requires agency leadership committed to ensuring that the Model’s approaches are conducted with fidelity, supported by policy development, staff training, and quality assurance efforts.

⁶ For more information, see Wright, E. M., Spohn, R., & Chenane, J. L. (2017), *Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!) [Executive Summary]*. Omaha, NE: Nebraska Center for Justice Research, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2017, page 3.

Given that more than 110 jurisdictions across the United States have partnered with CJJR on the CYPM, there is a tremendous opportunity to further build the body of knowledge on the impact of the Model. Participating CYPM sites should continue to partner with researchers, including those based in academic institutions, to support such program and outcome evaluations. Beyond studies of the CYPM in individual communities, future research could also explore the Model's longevity in various types of jurisdictions, across different regions of the country, and during multiple timeframes.

For more information on the CYPM, please visit <https://cjjr.georgetown.edu/our-work/crossover-youth-practice-model/>

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