

Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado:

A report of findings per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407(10)(b)

December 2018

Prepared by

Linda Harrison
Germaine Miera
Peg Flick
Kevin Ford
Kim English
Laurence Lucero



COLORADO
Department of Public Safety

Colorado Department of Public Safety
Division of Criminal Justice
Office of Research and Statistics
700 Kipling, Denver, Colorado 80215
<http://dcj.state.co.us/ors/>

Stan Hilkey, Executive Director, Department of Public Safety
Joe Thome, Director, Division of Criminal Justice
Kim English, Research Director, Office of Research and Statistics

Acknowledgements

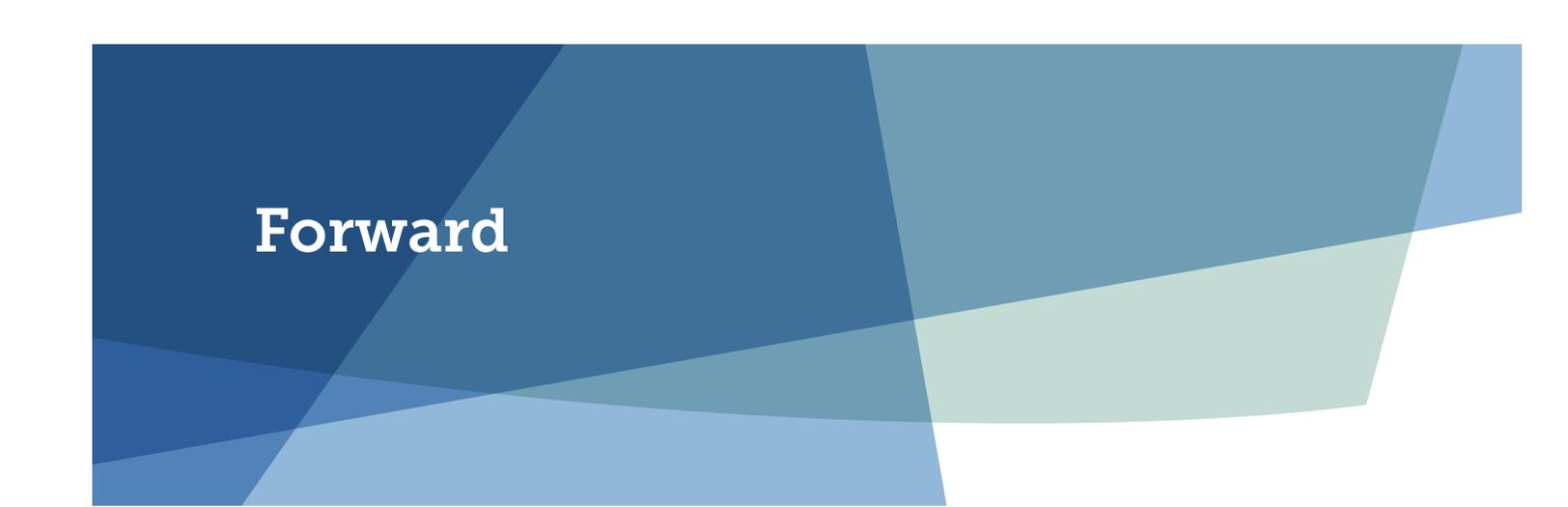
This research would not have been possible without the assistance of officials at the Colorado Department of Corrections. We thank Rick Raemisch, Executive Director of DOC and Travis Trani, Director of Prisons for their support of this study. We would also like to thank the YOS management team, including Warden Randy Lind, Associate Warden David Sliger, and Administrative Services Manager David Bergman for their invaluable assistance. We are particularly grateful to David Bergman who worked closely with us to coordinate the data collection and provide access to YOS documentation about the program. David patiently answered dozens of questions and assisted the research team in innumerable ways. We also thank Richard Kluckow from DOC's Office of Planning and Analysis, for assisting us with quantitative data.

Finally, we are grateful to the staff and residents of YOS who participated in the study. To take part in the study, many staff came to work on their day off or before/after their shift. The residents who participated were polite and engaging. We very much appreciate the level of interest and cooperation we received while we were collecting data for this study of YOS.

Despite this assistance and cooperation, any errors or omissions are ours alone.

YOS Evaluation Team

December 2018



Forward

The Division of Criminal Justice is mandated by statute to conduct a bi-annual evaluation of the Youthful Offender System and present the findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. Many of the recommendations that accompanied both the 2014 and 2016 reports have been addressed by YOS leadership, resulting in important programming modifications following the publication of these reports. We appreciate the response of YOS administrators to the findings of our evaluations.

Table of contents

iii	Acknowledgements
v	Forward
1	Executive summary
9	Section 1: Introduction
15	Section 2: Research questions and study design
19	Section 3: Findings
43	Section 4: Recommendations

Appendices

47	Appendix A:	Resident questionnaire
55	Appendix B:	Staff questionnaire

Figures

23	Figure 3.1:	YOS status levels, privileges, and expectations
29	Figure 3.2:	Race and ethnicity of YOS intakes, FY 2002-2018 (N=1,014)
31	Figure 3.3:	Felony class of most serious conviction crime for YOS intakes, FY 2002-2018 (N=1,014)
33	Figure 3.4:	YOS termination types, FY 2008-2018 (N=643)
34	Figure 3.5:	Percent of successful releases with new filing or conviction within 2 years, by type, 1998-2016 (N=1051)

Tables

17	Table 2.1:	Staff respondent positions
27	Table 3.1:	What employment do you plan to pursue after leaving YOS?
28	Table 3.2:	Age at intake, FY 2006-2018
30	Table 3.3:	Most serious conviction charge, FY 2012-2018
31	Table 3.4:	Average subscores on the LSI for YOS intakes, FY 2016-2018
32	Table 3.5:	Academic needs of YOS intakes, FY 2012-2018
33	Table 3.6:	Successful YOS releases, 2-year post-release recidivism
35	Table 3.7:	Do you think there is consistent philosophy between facility administrators and line staff?
36	Table 3.8:	YOS staff perceptions of morale
39	Table 3.9:	Do you feel safe at YOS?

Executive summary

DOC/YOS response to 2016 study recommendations

In 2016, the Division of Criminal Justice completed its biennial evaluation of the Department of Corrections' Youthful Offender System (YOS).¹ Researchers administered two surveys, one to staff (with a 68% response rate) and one to residents (with a 97% response rate), and conducted numerous interviews with YOS staff and officials. Multiple themes emerged from the study which resulted in seven recommendations for improvements to the YOS program. YOS administrators were extremely responsive to the study recommendations, as discussed below.

2016 recommendation 1

The average age of incoming YOS participants has been increasing as a result of statutory modifications regarding YOS eligibility. In 2016, YOS intakes were, on average, nearly 19 years old. YOS administrators should continue their efforts, currently underway, to examine existing educational programming and staffing to ensure that it is relevant to an older population. In addition, over one-third (38.2%) of YOS intakes in 2016 were functionally illiterate, reflecting the need for a wide range of educational programming necessary to meet the needs of this older population.

Additionally, YOS administrators should continue its efforts to expand programming related to parenting since many of the YOS residents are parents of young children. This includes exploring ways to expand parent/family engagement opportunities.

Due to the increase in the average age at intake, YOS administrators made the decision to terminate the high school curriculum, emphasizing the GED instead. High school must be completed before the age of 21.5, and older residents have limited time to achieve the mandatory high school credits required for a diploma. Administrators believe this change has increased efficiencies;

¹ The report may be accessed here: http://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/ors/docs/reports/2016-12_YOSRpt.pdf.

the GED must be completed prior to participation in vocational programming. CTE (Career and Technology Education) programs are offered in addition to previous vocational/post-secondary courses.

Regarding parenting programming, since the publication of the 2016 evaluation report and recommendations, the "Parents on a Mission" curriculum was established for the residents who are parents. At first the curriculum was targeted solely to those who had children, but it has since been expanded to the full population and is now a required course. Parents on a Mission is in addition to the previously established curriculum, Baby Think It Over.

2016 recommendation 2

The 2016 turnover of management staff at YOS resulted in an organization in transition. Administrators should make every effort to communicate their vision and expectations to line and program staff to ensure that staff morale and the YOS program mission are not compromised as YOS evolves.

The 2016 evaluation took place during a time of considerable organizational change at YOS. At that time, multiple YOS managers were reassigned to other DOC facilities while managers from other facilities were transferred to YOS. Additionally, the oversight of YOS was moved from the Division of Parole to the Division of Prisons. Subsequently, the 2016 evaluation showed a decrease in staff morale and differences between facility administrators and line staff regarding the philosophy of YOS.

YOS administrators have implemented annual strategic planning sessions that involve staff from all program areas and ranks. Administrators report that, to encourage engagement and ownership, staff from all levels of the organization are actively involved in assessing processes and programs. Case management services and offender case planning are now aligned with the larger DOC mission, according to YOS administrators. Specifically, staff previously designated as Youth Counselors are now Case Managers, which is in line with DOC's implementation of the Colorado Transitional Accountability Plan (CTAP). YOS and La Vista Correctional Facility now operate under the same appointing authority which has resulted in more seamless management of offenders. Previously, the warden was responsible for YOS only. Now the YOS warden is responsible for La Vista, too.

Bi-weekly Management Team Meetings provide opportunities for the Management Team and area supervisors to collaborate and discuss concerns and policy. It also ensures follow up on critical issues and projects. All-staff policy meetings are held monthly.

2016 recommendation 3

Efforts to fill the vacant mental health position must be prioritized by YOS administrators. This recommendation was made in 2012, 2014 and again in 2016. This is a critically important position, and survey comments from staff and residents reflect a broad recognition of this gap in services. Administrators should work with human resource officials to identify ways to attract qualified and committed applicants.

Both Social Worker III positions are filled as this report goes to press.

2016 recommendation 4

Concerns about gang activity were voiced by both staff and residents. The current review of YOS programming by DOC administrators as it relates to gang activity should continue, and the historical practice of not recognizing gang-related behavior (described in the 2014 YOS evaluation report) should be reconsidered. Considerable research exists regarding gang intervention programming,² and this material should be reviewed and incorporated into new programming at YOS.

A significant change from the 2016 reorganization resulted in a new YOS contract that specifically states that an offender may be transferred out of YOS to DOC for “STG [security threat groups] and/or gang related issues, involvement, actions, and/or behaviors.”³ Consequences, prior to transfer, include increased cognitive classes, assignment to the Violence Reduction Program, status change, privilege restriction, behavior contracts, remediation, and short-term isolation in IDO. This zero-tolerance policy appears to have clarified an issue that created considerable tension in the past; gang activity was rarely mentioned in the open-ended questions by staff and by residents, in significant contrast to evaluation findings reported in 2014 and 2016.

2016 recommendation 5

Programming for the women continues to challenge YOS administrators despite ongoing efforts to improve services for this population. With the upcoming completion of the multipurpose building, efforts should focus on expanding the women’s access to programming and recreational activities.

YOS has made important progress in this area. GED instruction is available to all YOS residents, including the women. Women also have access to post-secondary core classes offered in the evenings, along with cosmetology, and video-conferencing is available for women to participate in graphic arts and

² See for example <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/231116.pdf>

³ Administrative Regulation 1600-01A, regarding youth transfers from DOC, dated 2/15/18.

business courses. A driving simulator and two welding simulators were installed in the female unit, and work opportunities were expanded somewhat. One of the criticisms from the women during past evaluations was that they did not have the same opportunity as the men to have jobs or to make money inside the facility. In the past two years a few work opportunities have been made available to the women including janitorial jobs in the administrative buildings. The required separation of men and women inside the facility continues to restrict the possibility of work in other areas like the kitchen and library.

As of July 2018, all of the women at YOS had completed both the welding and machining labs through Pueblo Community College, which provides them the same certificate as the men. Additionally, everyone in Phase I, including the women, have access to a simulator forklift certificate.

Recreational improvements include the installation of a walking track, stationary exercise equipment and a basketball court outside Building 26 where the women are housed. The women also have access to the new multi-purpose building twice a week. This building includes a gymnasium, music room, library and law library, among other areas.

2016 recommendation 6

The YOS management team should continue its work building and maintaining excellent relationships with community stakeholder employers who assist with job fairs, resume/interview skills, and hiring.

YOS continues to maintain excellent relationships with approximately 20 community stakeholders, impacting Phase I, Phase II and Phase III residents. Community partners include Vestas, Everest Steel, Work Force, Express Personnel, Denver Works/CO Springs, Servicios De la Raza, Colorado Hazard Control, Pueblo Community College, Administrators Pueblo D60, Colorado Construction Careers, Colorado Prestress, Shisler Concrete, PWAG, Phil Long Ford, Colorado Truck Driving School, May Trucking, and Red Rocks Community College Gateway Program.

2016 recommendation 7

YOS administrators should carefully document the outcomes of the new “youth transfers” pursuant to Senate Bill 15-182. This bill allows for the identification and placement of certain individuals who were directly sentenced to prison to be placed in YOS if DOC administrators believe they could benefit from the program.

YOS administrators are, indeed, carefully tracking the outcomes of Youthful Transfers. Fourteen residents were Youthful Transfers at the time of data collection, and all participated in the survey. Between January 2016 and early

October 2018, 50 DOC inmates agreed to participate in YOS as Youthful Transfers; 16 were later returned to DOC, 10 at the request of the offender and 6 who were deemed no longer appropriate for YOS programming. As of October 2018, 21 were granted parole, released to community corrections, or granted early release by the Parole Board. It is noteworthy that the Youthful Transfers were granted these releases at their first board appearance because all had completed their GED, participated in required programming, participated in prerelease activities via Phase III, and had acceptable parole plans.

The current evaluation

In 2018, The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice undertook its biennial evaluation of the Department of Correction's Youthful Offender System. This report presents a broad picture of the operations of YOS as observed from the perspective of the residents, staff, and managers. Division researchers surveyed staff (with a 69% response rate) and residents (with an 88% response rate), and analyzed data provided by DOC. From multiple data collection efforts, various themes emerged to answer the research questions that guided the study.

Summary

Overall, the YOS operations are generally consistent with statute and likely represent the intent of the drafters of the original YOS legislation.⁴ One of the most significant changes to take place between the 2016 and 2018 evaluations was the removal of the high school curriculum from YOS with a stronger emphasis on General Education Diploma (GED) and Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities. As with prior evaluation findings, education/vocational training is valued by both staff and residents; over 71% of residents said they would choose YOS again because of these opportunities. With the completion of the new multi-purpose building, YOS administrators continue to expand vocational programming and opportunities for skills development. Additionally, concerns about the lack of consequences for negative behavior have resulted in a renewed emphasis on accountability by the administration.

The average age at intake increased between 2006 and 2013, which was to be expected due to statutory changes in 2010 that removed most juveniles ages 14 and 15 from direct file consideration⁵ and the 2009 statutory modification that extended the age of sentencing to include 19 and 20 year olds.⁶ In 2015, legislation was passed allowing the transfer of offenders up to age 24 from DOC to YOS.⁷ Prior to 2010, the average age

⁴ Prior DCJ evaluations in 2002 and 2004 did not make this finding. However, alignment with statute has been a consistent finding in subsequent evaluations.

⁵ C.R.S. §19-2-517.

⁶ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407.

⁷ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407.5.

at intake hovered around 17 years, but began to increase toward 18 in 2010 and further toward 19 through 2016 due to the influx of 20-year old and a few 21- through 23- year old offenders. In 2017 and 2018, however, the average age dropped back to 18 with relatively few of these older offenders being admitted to YOS.

The majority of YOS staff (86.4%) reported that they consistently see themselves as role models, and another 10% saw themselves as role models “sometimes.” With a strong staff and administration, and the continued expansion of programs and activities, YOS is positioned to positively impact the lives of many residents. The proportion of residents successfully completing their sentence at YOS remained around 90.0% between 2014 and 2017. This fell to 75% in 2018. YOS administrators believe this lower completion rate is due to two factors: a higher need population, and the implementation of greater accountability measures.⁸ The 2-year felony reconviction rate after program completion is 24.8%, and only 11.6% were reconvicted of a violent felony crime within 2 years. These are very positive outcomes, especially given the very serious nature of the YOS population.

2018 study recommendations

1. **Education.** The average age of incoming YOS participants has been increasing as a result of statutory modifications regarding YOS eligibility. YOS intakes are now, on average, 18.2 years old. YOS administrators should continue their efforts, currently underway, to examine existing educational programming and staffing to ensure that it is relevant to an older population.

Additionally, YOS administrators should continue their efforts to expand programming related to parenting since many of the YOS residents are parents of young children. This includes exploring ways to expand parent/family engagement opportunities.

Finally, given the lack of reliability of the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) score due to residents not accurately completing the assessment, efforts should be made to discontinue its use with this population, or to work closely with residents during testing to ensure the information they provide is accurate.

2. **Management and morale.** The turnover of management staff at YOS in 2016 resulted in an organization in transition, affecting communication and morale. While morale has improved since the 2016 evaluation, it has not rebounded to pre-transition levels. Administrators should continue current efforts to communicate their vision and expectations to line and program staff to ensure that staff morale and the YOS program mission are not compromised as YOS evolves.

⁸ In addition, YOS underwent significant organizational changes beginning in 2016 which may have in part contributed to a lower program success rate. Individuals on Phase III, in the community, fail YOS if they commit a new crime; the most common new crime is escape according to the DOC’s FY17 Annual YOS Report (see <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdoc/departamental-reports-and-statistics>).

3. **Sanctions and family contact.** Criminology research has found that family contact and support is a critical component of recidivism reduction. Administrators should encourage and promote family relationships, and should reconsider any sanction or earned “privilege” that limits family contact, in particular, phone contact.
4. **Mail.** Administrators should investigate and resolve issues related to the delays in receiving mail, as reported by residents.
5. **Women residents.** Despite substantial improvements in this area, programming for the women continues to challenge YOS. With the completion of the multipurpose building, efforts should continue to focus on expanding the women’s access to programming and recreational activities.
6. **Community engagement.** The YOS management team should continue its work building and maintaining excellent relationships with community stakeholder employers who assist with job fairs, resume/interview skills, and hiring.

Section 1: Introduction

Sixth evaluation in a series

This report represents the sixth evaluation of the Colorado Department of Correction's (DOC) Youthful Offender System (YOS) conducted by the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ). The Division is mandated to evaluate the program semiannually and submit the findings to the General Assembly on November 1 of even numbered years. However, this mandate is not funded by the General Assembly, and evaluations are completed as resources become available.

The first report was completed in November, 2002. This and the subsequent two reports focused on recidivism rates, funding levels, comparisons of legislative intent to actual implementation, and characteristics of the YOS population. In addition, the 2004 and 2012 reports included information on the perspectives of residents, staff, and administrators involved in the program. The following two reports, prepared in 2014 and 2016, concentrated on legislative and DOC intent compared to actual implementation, the perceptions of residents and staff on a variety of topics, the comparison of the arrest and conviction histories of youth committed to YOS with those placed in other sentencing options, and an analysis of program failure and recidivism. Each of these reports included recommendations based on the study findings.⁹ The current report continues this tradition, reflecting data collected during the spring and summer of 2018.

⁹ *Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado: A Report of Findings Per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407.* (2002). Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research and Statistics.; *Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado: A Report of Findings Per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407.* (2004). Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research and Statistics.; *Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado: A Report of Findings Per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407.* (2012). Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research and Statistics.; *Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado: A Report of Findings Per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407.* (2014). Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research and Statistics.; *Evaluation of the Youthful Offender System (YOS) in Colorado: A Report of Findings Per C.R.S. 18-1.3-407.* (2016). Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Research and Statistics.

Organization of this report

Section One provides a brief overview of YOS and its enabling statute. Section Two specifies the research questions and describes the research methods employed for this study. Section Three presents the findings to the research questions as well as relevant additional findings, and recommendations for improvement are included in Section Four.

Background and description of YOS

The Youthful Offender System (YOS) was established by a special session of the Colorado General Assembly in 1994 specifically to address youth violence. This special assembly was convened following a series of high-profile crimes committed by juveniles. YOS opened in 1994 on the grounds of the Department of Corrections' Reception and Diagnostic Center in Denver, and became a sentencing option for juveniles who were prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced as adults on or after June 3, 1994 for offenses committed on or after September 13, 1993. In 1998, YOS moved to Pueblo, and in 2006 it moved to its current location on the grounds of the Colorado Mental Health Institute.

YOS is an alternative to a traditional adult prison, and it exists as a separate entity inside the Department of Corrections, with a separate facility and a specially designed system of programming. The statute describing YOS specifies that the state must provide a sentencing option for "certain youthful offenders" who would serve up to seven years day-for-day (meaning no good/earned time would apply) while a lengthier sentence to DOC would be suspended for the duration of the YOS sentence. According to statute, YOS offenders are to serve time in a "controlled and regimented environment that affirms dignity of self and others, promotes the value of work and self-discipline, and develops useful skills and abilities through enriched programming."¹⁰ The statute directs DOC to develop a program that provides "separate housing for female and male offenders who are sentenced to [YOS] without compromising the equitable treatment of either."¹¹ The statute mandates that program participants be housed separate "from and not brought into daily physical contact with adult offenders" and that these offenders be "subject to all laws and DOC rules, regulations, and standards pertaining to adult offenders..."¹²

The original target population for YOS was youth between the ages of 14 and 17 at the time of the offense, who were prosecuted in adult court (via direct file or transfer) and subsequently convicted as adults.¹³ In 2009, the General Assembly expanded the eligibility criteria for sentencing to YOS (H.B. 09-1122) to include those who were 18 and 19 at the time of the offense (limited to Felony 3-6 violent crimes) and who were

¹⁰ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407(1)(a).

¹¹ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407(1)(b).

¹² C.R.S. §18-1.3-407(1)(d).

¹³ C.R.S. §19-2-517 (direct file), §19-2-518 (court transfer).

sentenced prior to their 21st birthday. This provision was repealed in 2012, but reinstated the following year. In 2010, statute modifications precluded juveniles 14 and 15 years of age from direct file consideration with the exception of 1st degree murder, any felony sex offense, and habitual juvenile offenders.

Eligibility for the YOS program was modified on October 1, 2009 to include individuals who are 18 and 19 years old at the time of the offense but less than age 21 at the time of sentencing. This eligibility provision was repealed on October 1, 2012 but was reinstated during the 2013 legislative session.

In 2010, statute modifications precluded juveniles 14 and 15 years of age from direct file consideration with the exception of 1st degree murder, any felony sex offense, and habitual juvenile offenders. Additionally, the passage of Senate Bill 2015-182 allowed DOC the discretion to transfer any offender up to age twenty-four years with a DOC sentence into YOS.¹⁴ With these changes, the average age of the YOS population at admission increased from 16.9 in FY 2008 to 19.0 in FY 2016. This average declined over the two past 2 years, to 18.4 in FY 2017 and to 18.2 in FY 2018.

Determinant YOS sentences range from two to 6 years for those convicted of felony classes 3 through 6. However, those convicted of a class 2 Felony may be sentenced for up to seven years.

The statute describes a three phase program based on “self-discipline, a daily regime of exercise, education and work programs, and meaningful interaction, with a component for a tiered system for swift and strict discipline for noncompliance...”¹⁵ YOS staff are to be mentors and role models to promote socially acceptable attitudes and behaviors, and programming is to include problem-solving skills and cognitive behavioral strategies that have the potential to change criminal thinking and behavior.¹⁶

Additionally, the YOS program is intended to promote among youthful offenders a pro-social culture and provide an opportunity to gradually reenter the community. The enabling statute also specifies that DOC officials will staff the YOS with individuals “who are trained in the treatment of youthful offenders...trained to act as role models and mentors...”¹⁷ To this end, the statute requires the following specific program components:

- **Orientation Training Phase.** During this 30- to 45-day period, residents undergo a comprehensive battery of intake assessments, including a thorough needs assessment and evaluation. An individualized progress plan is developed, re-entry challenges are identified, and residents are acclimated to the facility. Orientation includes explanations of the full scope of YOS activities and

¹⁴ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407.5.

¹⁵ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407(3)(b).

¹⁶ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407(3)(d).

¹⁷ C.R.S. § 18-1.3-407(3.5).

behavioral expectations. When not involved in orientation or diagnostic activities, the offender participates in highly structured and regimented physical activities.¹⁸ This is a high security unit where all new arrivals to YOS are assigned.

- **Phase I.** This is the longest YOS phase, lasting from approximately eight to 75 months during which time a range of intense core programs, supplementary activities, and educational and prevocational programs and services are provided to offenders. Living units are staffed with multidisciplinary teams and security, discipline, education, treatment, and behavior modification is the shared responsibility of each staff member.¹⁹ Job assignments exist in food service, maintenance, janitorial service, teacher aide, library aide, recreation and laundry. Residents attend education courses in conjunction with having a work assignment. At any point in time, the majority of YOS offenders are in Phase I.
- **Phase II.** This component occurs during the last three months of institutional confinement; offenders remain under 24-hour supervision while on scheduled appointments and community service activities²⁰ in the community. All residents participate in a monthly employment seminar which focuses on career planning, labor market information, interviewing skills, and job seeking skills. YOS administrators have worked consistently to expand the number of employers and community partners who work with this population in Phase II. Phase II staff assist residents in obtaining birth certificates, social security cards, and identification cards that will be necessary when offenders transition to the community.²¹
- **Phase III.** This final component of a YOS sentence consists of a period of six to 12 months of community supervision when the offender is monitored during reintegration into society. An offender's eligibility for movement from Phase II to Phase III is based on (1) the duration of the offender's sentence to YOS, and (2) demonstrated and documented positive behavior and program participation.²² Programming in Phase III includes education, employment, community service, drug and alcohol interventions, mental health treatment, restitution, and other activities as specified in the offender's transition plan. According to DOC's Administrative Regulation 250-06, caseloads of YOS Community Supervision Officers should not exceed 1:10, and supervision level is designed to focus resources on those who are at greater risk.

¹⁸ See *Youthful Offender System: Fiscal Year 2014*. (2015). Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis. See pages 19-21.

¹⁹ This description is from *Youthful Offender System: Fiscal Year 2014*. (2015). Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis.

²⁰ All offenders sentenced to YOS are required to complete 100 hours of community service.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Note that those offenders with ICE detainers are ineligible for Phase III.

The statute specifies that the YOS include the following program elements:

- (a) Provide for teaching offenders self-discipline by providing clear consequences for inappropriate behavior;
- (b) Include a daily regimen of physical training, self-discipline exercises, educational and work programs, and meaningful interaction, with a component for a tiered system for swift and strict discipline for noncompliance;
- (c) Use staff models and mentors to promote the development of socially accepted attitudes and behaviors;
- (d) Provide instruction on problem-solving skills including methods to reinforce the use of cognitive behavior strategies that change offenders' orientation toward criminal thinking and behavior;
- (e) Promote new group cultures which result in a transition to pro-social behavior; and
- (f) Provide offenders the opportunity to gradually reenter the community.²³

Finally, as stated previously, the YOS statute mandates that the Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) "independently monitor and evaluate"²⁴ YOS and present the findings to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. This report presents the findings of the sixth YOS evaluation conducted by DCJ.

²³ C.R.S. § 18-1.3-407(3)(a-f).

²⁴ C.R.S. § 18-1.3-407(10)(b).

Section 2:

Research questions and study design

Research questions

The following questions guided the current evaluation:

1. Per Colorado Revised Statute §18-1.3-407(3)(a-f), is the current operation of YOS consistent with statute?
 - a. Does the system provide for teaching offenders self-discipline by providing clear consequences for inappropriate behavior?
 - b. Does the system include a daily regimen of physical training, self-discipline exercises, education and work programs, meaningful interaction, with a component for a tiered system for swift and strict discipline for noncompliance?
 - c. Does the system use staff role models and mentors to promote the development of socially accepted attitudes and behaviors?
 - d. Does the system provide offenders with instruction on problem-solving skills and the use of cognitive behavior strategies that change offenders' orientation toward criminal thinking and behavior?
 - e. Does the system promote the creation and development of new group cultures which result in a transition to prosocial behavior?
 - f. Does the system provide offenders the opportunity to gradually reenter the community?

2. What are the current and overall characteristics of the YOS population? Have these changed over time?
3. What is the new filing rate of individuals released from YOS?

Institutional Review Board Approval

Researchers obtained permission from an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct surveys with YOS staff and residents. The process of gaining approval for contact with research subjects ensures that adequate steps will be taken to guarantee voluntary participation in the study and that privacy protections are in place.

Data Collection

Quantitative data concerning the YOS population were obtained from the Department of Corrections, and recidivism data were obtained from the Colorado Judicial Branch and Denver County Court.

Recidivism was defined as a new felony or misdemeanor filing within two years of release from the YOS. Recidivism data were obtained from the Judicial Branch and Denver County.²⁵ Additionally, DOC's Office of Planning and Analysis provided client-level information on all YOS admissions through June of 2018.

Information regarding perceptions and concerns of both YOS administrators/staff and offenders was collected using self-administered questionnaires. Resident questionnaires were five pages in length with 29 items, 14 of which were open-ended questions to solicit more-in-depth information concerning resident perspectives. One hundred forty-nine (149) residents participated in the survey, representing 88% of all available YOS residents. Staff questionnaires also contained 27 items, 11 of which were open-ended. Of the staff members available to participate, 69% returned completed surveys (n=111). Copies of the questionnaires are available in Appendix A.

Survey samples

Resident survey and descriptive information

Of the 149 residents surveyed, over half had experienced both of the residential phases of the YOS programming and 54.1% were in the highest 'Phoenix Level' (see Figure 3.1). The

²⁵ Note prior YOS evaluations excluded filings in Denver County. Additionally, traffic cases involving misdemeanors such as DUI/DWAI are included, whereas prior YOS evaluations did not include these types of cases because of system capacity limitations. Therefore, the new filing rate reported here can be expected to be higher than pre-2016 reports.

residents' DOC sentences ranged from three to 48 years, while YOS sentences ranged from 2 to 10 years. Study participants were, on average, 20.7 years old (ranging from 16-25), and had spent an average of 25 months at YOS (ranging from 1-63 months).

All of the female residents were included in the survey (n=7), as were all 14 transfers from DOC to YOS.²⁶

Staff survey and descriptive information

Staff members surveyed comprised a wide variety of positions, though the majority were correctional officers (74.7%). Most had worked at DOC for at least five years (71.8%), and 55.5% had been with DOC for at least 10 years. Almost a quarter (23.6%) had been with YOS for 10 years, although 38.2% had less than 2 years of experience with YOS, and 29.1% had less than 1 year. Most had no experience working with juveniles prior to coming to YOS (59.1%). Of those that did have such experience, only 35.6% reported that it involved working with juvenile offenders.

However, 74.5% felt that their prior education or experience had at least 'somewhat' prepared them for working with this population. Most (76.4%) had taken at least some specialized training to work with youthful offenders since coming to YOS. YOS requires and provides annual training for staff on YOS procedures and programming and adolescent-specific topics.

Table 2.1. Staff respondent positions

Position title	N	Percent
Administrative Services	3	2.8%
Warden/Associate warden	3	2.7%
Case Manager I	1	0.9%
Correctional Officer	80	74.7%
Support Services	7	6.5%
Health Professional	1	0.9%
Psych	2	1.9%
Teacher	8	7.5%
Volunteer coordinator	1	0.9%
Total	107	100%

²⁶ In 2015, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 182 (18-1.3-407, CRS) which allowed the DOC executive director or his or her designee to transfer any offender age twenty-four years or younger and sentenced to the Department of Corrections into and out of the Youthful Offender System at his or her discretion when those inmates could benefit from age-appropriate programming. Between January 2016 and early October 2018, 50 offenders were transferred from DOC to YOS.

Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed using Microsoft Excel and the statistical software package SPSS. Thematic content analysis was applied to the open-ended survey responses utilizing QSR International's NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

Limitations of this study

Time and resource constraints precluded researchers observing routine activities in the YOS setting including program groups and program participants. Additionally, unlike prior evaluations, focus groups were not conducted. Finally, Phase III was not included in this evaluation.

Section 3: **Findings**

This section begins with the research questions that were enumerated in Section 2 and that were derived from the YOS statute and follow the language put forth by the statute. Additional findings are included at the end of the section.

1. **Per Colorado Revised Statute 18-1.3-407(10)(b), is the current operation of YOS consistent with statute?**
- a) **Does the system provide for teaching offenders self-discipline by providing clear consequences for inappropriate behavior?**

YOS operations appear to be consistent with statute. Consequences for negative behaviors range from revocation to the Department of Correction's traditional prison system, to regression to lower behavioral status levels,²⁷ to negative chronological reports (which provide documentation over time). For serious types of misconduct, disciplinary measures also include regression to the Classification Unit for offenders receiving "removal from population" and special management consequences. Additionally, the use of Code of Penal Discipline (COPD) is being used to a greater extent than was found in previous evaluations. The COPD sanctions at YOS include 30- and 90-day loss of privileges for a Class II and Class I violation, respectively. Residents also can be restricted to the housing unit for 15 days for a Class II COPD. Status level changes may also be used in addition to COPD sanctions to ensure that offender status (see Figure 3.1) is an appropriate reflection of negative behaviors.

Additionally, since the 2016 evaluation, DOC has implemented the Offender Immediate Accountability Resolution (OIAR) which is specifically designed to address immediate accountability and long-term thinking and behavior change. At YOS, OIAR sanctions range from a verbal reprimand and/or a written assignment²⁸ to repayment for damages

²⁷ YOS has a behavior-based "level" system where those with higher status have greater privileges (see Figure 3.1).

²⁸ These assignments are intended to be specific to the offender's problem behavior and should include a plan of action to address misbehavior.

and/or loss of privileges. Progress Team Reviews (PTRs) can be conducted to address negative (and positive) behaviors and, if necessary, implement status level changes. A focus of YOS staff seeking accountability is Cognitive Intervention Programming (CIP) in which residents are assigned to programs that focus on long term individualized behavior change. Consequences include required participation in Guided Group Interaction (GGI), and Quick Skills and Thinking Errors, programs where residents may be assigned to participate in a specific module(s), such as anger management.

The current YOS offender contract designates a zero tolerance for Security Threat Group(STG)/gang-related issues, involvement and/or behaviors. This contract expectation can be used to hold residents accountable through status changes, privilege restrictions, additional programming, additional behavior contracts and, if necessary, it can provide grounds to seek revocation from YOS to DOC. In addition, YOS is using the Violence Reduction Program, a cognitive intervention, as a sanction for actions that are associated with violent conduct and which may be tied to gang-related behavior. The YOS Intelligence Officer is delivering education modules related to Gang Intervention as well as meeting with residents individually to address issues. Gang related issues are considered when making housing assignments; however, the expectations remains that residents must move past gang affiliations to remain at YOS.

On the part of residents, the majority (64.6%) of those surveyed felt somewhat or definitively that there are clear consequences for inappropriate behavior. However, a quarter (25.9%) indicated that 'discipline and rules are arbitrary' when asked what they felt were the worse things about YOS. When asked what suggestions they had for improving YOS, 18.0% listed 'consistent rules and consequences.'



b) Does the system include a daily regimen of physical training, self-discipline exercises, education and work programs, and meaningful interaction with a component for a tiered system for swift and strict discipline for noncompliance?

Yes, YOS includes a focus on physical training and self-discipline, along with education, work programs and meaningful interaction. At the Intake, Diagnostic, and Orientation (IDO) Phase, referred to as the Orientation Training Phase (OTP), which occurs during the first 30-45 days of the YOS sentence, residents receive needs assessments and diagnostic evaluations so that an individualized progress plan is developed, re-entry challenges are identified, and offenders are acclimated to the facility. The system provides for teaching residents self-discipline by providing clear consequences for inappropriate behavior.²⁹

The physical exercises and activities that the offenders undergo are designed to challenge and condition the offender both mentally and physically, to drain destructive energies, break down negative gang affiliation and activity, and begin to develop pro-social rapport

²⁹ Ibid.

between YOS employees and the residents. Throughout the first 30-45 days, when not involved in orientation or diagnostic activities, the resident participates in highly structured and regimented physical activities. The limitation of idle time through physical activity is emphasized throughout the entire YOS sentence.³⁰

When asked what they believed were the best things about YOS, 23.5% mentioned the recreation opportunities, the gym and weight training. In fact, since the 2016 evaluation report, YOS has significantly increased access to physical training and exercise. The completion of a new multi-purpose building added 13,941 square feet of space including a gymnasium and an indoor workout area with cardiovascular machines and weights. Building 26, which houses the Phase II and female offenders, now has a walking track, basketball court, volleyball court and stationary exercise equipment.

Regarding education and work programs, as required in statute, YOS offers GED preparation and certifications, Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs and vocational programming. Previously, a high school diploma curriculum was offered, however this has been discontinued. This change is in response to older offenders arriving with limited credits and limited time to achieve mandatory credits before aging out of YOS.³¹ This also provides an opportunity for residents to spend more time in CTE and vocational programs because a GED can be achieved at a faster pace than completing high school credits. In June 2018, 42 residents graduated, 35 with a GED and 7 with a high school diploma (the final class of high school graduates).³²

Special Education opportunities continue to be offered in GED course instruction, at a teacher to student ratio of one teacher to 7 students. This allows for additional attention to individual needs and focused learning. The teacher/student ratio for residents receiving Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services is one teacher to 3 students.

Additional CTE programs have been added, including Introduction to Carpentry/Construction; a permanent YOS welding lab; mobile labs in welding and machining for females; and core curriculum night courses (e.g. English composition, Algebra, Speech).

A plan is in place to establish a Gladiator Training Program for Phase II residents that will provide individuals with an in-depth, visual and hands-on experience of the concrete reinforcing “ironworking” trade. At the completion of this class, residents will have an opportunity to become certified, unionized, trained iron workers. This effort is in

³⁰ *Youthful Offender System Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2017 (2017)*. Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis.

³¹ Colorado law requires completion of high school by age 21.5.

³² It should be noted that assessment instruments used by YOS describe a high-need population regarding education. In 2018, only 16.7% of intakes reported having a high school diploma or a GED, compared to 50% in 2012. Assessment data for recent intakes reflect that three-quarters of intakes reported that they were illiterate in English or functionally illiterate. Upon further examination by YOS administrators, it became clear that offenders were not spending the time necessary to answer the questions on the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) accurately; those with a high school diploma or GED, in particular, were completing the test in 10-15 minutes rather than the 90 minutes typically required. YOS uses additional assessment instruments to identify needs of offenders, including the Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI).

partnership with the Ironworkers Union, and jobs in this field are estimated to have a starting hourly pay range of \$17-\$20.

In surveys, 56.9% of residents stated education and training were one of the best things about YOS. When asked what parts of YOS were helping them prepare for the future, 41.9% said education-related programs, and 36.8% said vocation and work programs.

When asked what programs or activities have been most useful or important to them, 64.6% indicated education and school, and 50.3% stated vocational programming.

While the main reason given for choosing YOS over prison was sentence-related (67.3% of respondents said the shorter sentence was their reason), a third (34.0%) also stated they chose YOS for educational opportunities.

However, 22.3% of those surveyed expressed a desire for more or better vocational options. Some wished to see improvements made to the educational system and to have the high school restored (21.9%). A few comments from residents included these:

Bring the high school back.

Education went down the drain since I've been here.

We need more focus on the education program, and not take from it but add to it.

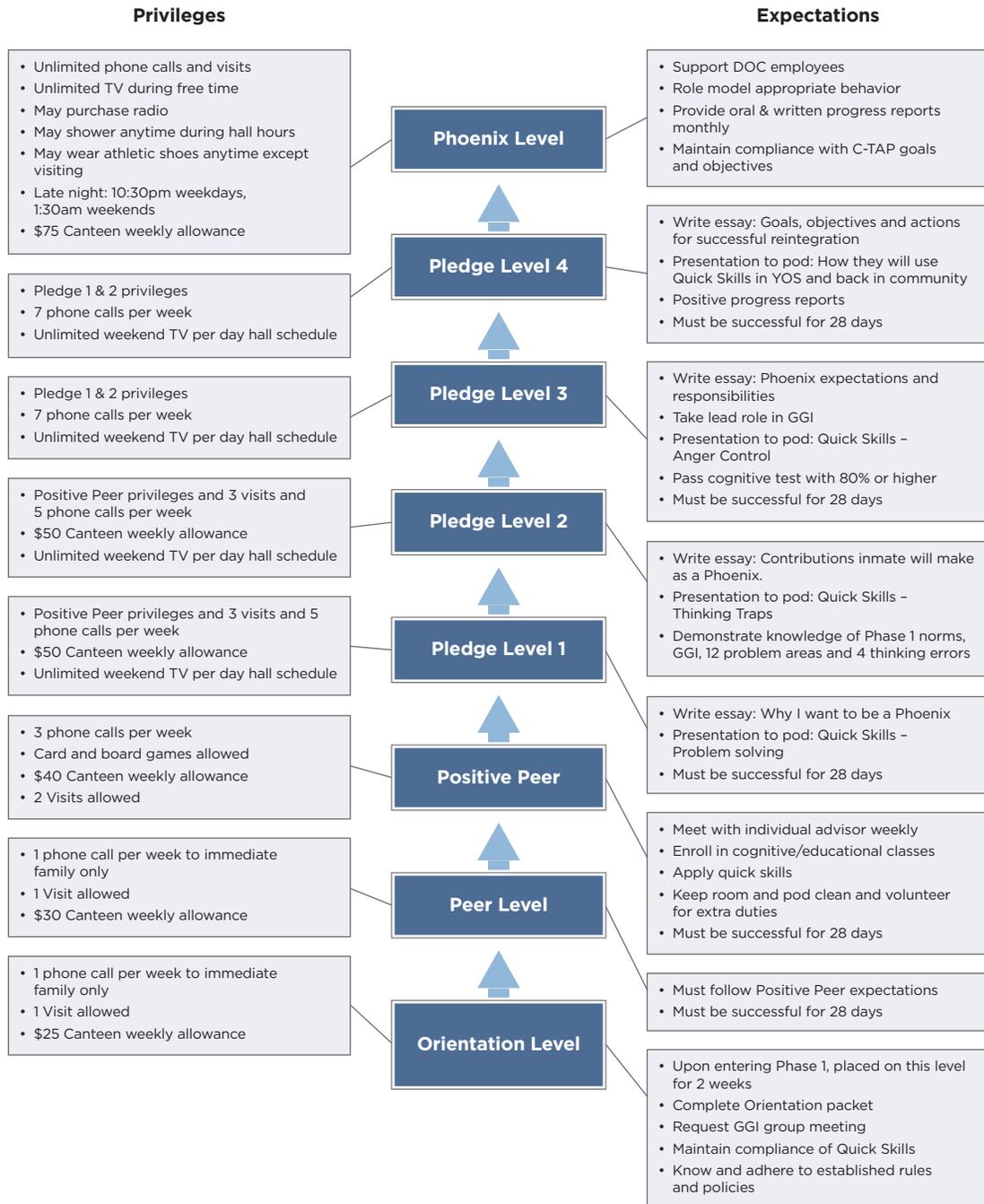
More teachers and vocational classes.

► *Does the system include a component for a tiered system for swift and strict discipline for noncompliance?*

Yes, a core component of YOS is the nine-level behavioral management system which links behavioral expectations to privileges. Please see Figure 3.1 for a partial description of the expectations and privileges associated with the behavioral management system. To progress in the level system, individuals are required to behave according to YOS norms and expectations. These norms and expectations are posted in the housing units and articulated in the staff and *YOS Offender Reception and Orientation Manual*. YOS staff can immediately drop a resident in status, depending on the individual's current and past behavior. Administrators report that this process is individualized, with an emphasis on accountability and cognitive programming to address both immediate and long-term behavior change.

Since the last evaluation, changes have been made to the positive peer culture at YOS. Specifically, Phoenix level residents are no longer responsible or expected to confront the negative behavior of other residents. Confrontation of negative behavior is now entirely left to the staff. Residents may be encouraged to try to influence others but it is not expected.

Figure 3.1. YOS status levels, privileges, and expectations



Additionally, the remediation process has changed in the past two years with the removal of the Disciplinary Level (segregation and restrictive housing). Previously, when someone was put on Disciplinary Level, they were sent back to IDO. However, this resulted in the troubled youth mixing with the new incoming youth. Consequently, IDO now consists of two pods, one for the new people transferring into YOS, and another pod called the Classification Unit for remediation. Another change is when someone is placed in the Classification Unit they are allowed six hours out each day. Previously, when someone was on punitive restrictive housing, they were given only one hour out each day.

- ▶ *Does the system use staff role models and mentors to promote the development of socially accepted attitudes and behavior?*

Staff are required by state statute and administrative rules and expectations to act as role models and mentors to YOS residents. The first paragraph of the *YOS Teachers Handbook* states the following: “Through your actions and spoken words, you will model the appropriate manner your students should behave and interact with others.”³³ Most YOS employees who participated in the study seem to take this expectation seriously. The majority (85.6%) of staff members disclosed that they consistently saw themselves as a role model for the YOS residents. Another 9.9% saw themselves as role models ‘sometimes.’ This was consistent across all positions, including correctional officers, teachers, administrative, support and maintenance staff. Very few (n=4) indicated that they did not see themselves in this role.

Several staff members also emphasized their mentorship role when asked how the goals and philosophies of YOS differed from those of DOC:

YOS is very program oriented. I believe it is more important for YOS staff to be positive role models to the YOS offenders, because they are younger and more impressionable.

I feel that YOS has its main focus on helping youth offenders prepare for life after prison and to be successful.

YOS is more of a re-entry program designed to help young offenders succeed. The rest of DOC is barely beginning to use the re-entry philosophy.

This is a younger population with different needs and risks. YOS targets those needs and works to change criminal thinking.

We try to turn around young offenders.

At YOS we try to educate, equip, and model good behaviors to the offenders so they don't come back to DOC.

³³ *YOS Teacher Handbook*, page 6.



c) Does the system provide offenders with instruction on problem-solving skills and the use of cognitive behavior strategies?

Yes, YOS offers several types of problem-solving instruction and cognitive behavioral approaches, including Guided Group Interaction (GGI),³⁴ Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens, sex offender treatment, anger management classes, victim empathy classes,³⁵ substance abuse classes, Quick Skills (cognitive skill-building techniques), Baby-Think-It-Over,³⁶ and Thinking for a Change.³⁷ Evaluating the delivery, content, and fidelity of specific program elements such as these is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

When asked what kind of skills to manage stress and anger they had learned, 67% of residents surveyed indicated that they had learned or developed a variety of coping skills while at YOS.



d) Does the system promote the creation and development of new group cultures which result in a transition to prosocial behavior?

A primary method of promoting pro-social behavior is the use of a behavioral management/level system to gain privileges, as discussed previously (see Figure 3.1). Privileges are earned under a merit system, and these increase with the offender's status levels but can be lost due to problematic behavior or rule infractions. Behavioral expectations are articulated in the *Offender Reception and Orientation Manual* (2012). Privileges include visitation, telephone calls, television, radios, and canteen items.³⁸ Inconsistency in rule enforcement, and inconsistency in general practice, was a concern frequently mentioned by both staff and residents. These inconsistencies, as discussed previously, can have important consequences for the residents' status/privileges, making loss of privileges or lack of progress dependent on staff behavior as much as offender behavior.

As required by statute, YOS also uses positive peer culture as a fundamental method of teaching pro-social behavior. Because peers are one of the most influential aspects of a young person's life, they can both encourage and discourage antisocial behaviors.³⁹ Social learning theory states that youth can develop self-worth, significance, dignity, and responsibility through commitment to the positive values of helping and caring

³⁴ GGI uses group dynamics and peer pressure to promote pro-social behaviors. See *Youthful Offender System Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2017*. (2017). Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis.

³⁵ The curriculum for "Victim Impact: Listen and Learn" was developed by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs.

³⁶ This Phase 2 program involves providing the offenders, both male and female, with computer-simulated infant dolls that cry when they need something (to be fed, changed, etc.). The women keep these dolls for a period of 4 weeks; the men keep them for one week.

³⁷ *Thinking for a Change*, developed by the National Institute of Corrections, is an evidence-based program.

³⁸ *Youthful Offender System: Fiscal Year 2013*. (2014). Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis.

³⁹ Brown, B., Clasen, D., & Eicher, S. (1986). Perceptions of peer pressure per conformity dispositions, and self-reported behavior among adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 521-530.

for others⁴⁰ and can learn how to behave appropriately or inappropriately through the observation of peers that they respect and look to for guidance.⁴¹ Positive peer culture was developed with the assumption that as peers learn to trust, respect and take responsibility for the behaviors of others in the group they can influence each other in a manner that will decrease antisocial behavior and increase pro-social attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.⁴² If delinquency is influenced by one's peer group, individuals will respond to peer pressure for change, positive or negative.⁴³ Within the construct of positive peer culture, peers will develop and maintain positive behaviors and characteristics including:

- A sense of belonging;
- A code of conduct that assures a safe environment and promotes pro-social behavior;
- Individual members responding positively to the influences of the group;
- Each member has a sense that they can significantly contribute in a positive manner to the group;
- Individuals demonstrate social responsibility to the group and the group assists in reinforcing pro-social behavior; and
- Criticism of maladaptive behavior.⁴⁴

YOS uses the behavioral management/level system to promote a positive peer culture, and those who reach Phoenix status become role models for other YOS residents. It should be noted, however, that implementing a positive peer culture is difficult with delinquent youth because, as researchers have found, juveniles are in fact learning from and being reinforced by the "leaders" in their community, and the behaviors may not be the positive, pro-social behaviors intended by therapists and correctional personnel.⁴⁵ Thus, involvement and supervision/intervention of staff is necessary to ensure that positive behaviors are being displayed and encouraged by the peer community.⁴⁶ It is in this context of instilling a positive peer culture that staff consistency, then, becomes especially important.

⁴⁰ Brendtro, L.K. & Vorrath, H.H. (1985). *Positive peer culture* (2nd Ed.). Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction.

⁴¹ Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall; Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and actions: A social-cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

⁴² Ryan, J.P. (2006). Dependent youth in juvenile justice: Do positive peer culture programs work for victims of child maltreatment? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16(5), 511-519; Zimpfer, D.G. (1992). Group work with delinquents. *The Journal Specialist in Group Work*, 17(2), 116-126.

⁴³ Harstad, C.D. (1976). Guided group interaction: Positive peer culture. *Child Care Quarterly*, 5(2), 109-120.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.troubledteenblog.com/2008/07/positive-peer-culture-adolescent-residential-treatment-philosophy/>.

⁴⁵ Dishion, T.J., McCord, J., & Poulin, F. (1999). When interventions harm: Peer groups and problem behavior. *American Psychologist*, 54(9), 755-764.

⁴⁶ Ibid.



e) Does the system provide offenders the opportunity to gradually reenter the community?

Phase II and Phase III are designed to gradually reintegrate the individual into the community. The Phase II component of YOS is referred to as pre-release,⁴⁷ and it occurs during the last three months of incarceration at the Pueblo facility. It includes supervised scheduled appointments and activities in the community. A focus in Phase II is building on the academic skills acquired in Phase I, and residents participate in career planning and job seeking skills. Individuals must attend classes in nutrition and food preparation, budgeting and personal safety.⁴⁸ An important component of Phase II is the acquisition of birth certificates, social security cards, and Colorado identification cards that are necessary for job applications and housing.

Community transition team meetings include YOS staff from Phase I, II, and III, clinical staff, the resident’s educational advisor, family members and relevant community service providers. These meetings occur during Phase II to develop an individualized supervision and reentry plan for Phase III. Phase III is six to 12 months of intensive supervision in the community. According to DOC documentation, actual time in Phase III is based on (1) the duration of the individual’s sentence to YOS, and (2) demonstrated and documented positive behavior and program participation (those with positive behavior are released earlier and have longer periods of Phase III).

Most residents (78.7%) felt YOS was helping them prepare for their future after YOS. Two thirds (63.8%) of residents surveyed had a specific plan for employment after leaving YOS. The table below outlines employment categories mentioned by residents surveyed.

Table 3.1. What employment do you plan to pursue after leaving YOS?

Employment category	N	%
Artistic	16	10.7%
Business-Retail	19	12.8%
Engineering-Technical	9	6.0%
Other	9	6.0%
Professional	4	2.7%
Services	5	3.4%
Trades	107	71.8%
Non-employment	54	36.2%

Note residents may indicate more than one type of employment category. Therefore, the percentage total is greater than 100%.

⁴⁷ See *Youthful Offender System: Fiscal Year 2013*. (2014). Colorado Springs, CO: Colorado Department of Corrections, Office of Planning & Analysis. Pages 22-26.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



2. What are the current characteristics of the YOS population? Have these changed over time?

In large part, changes to the YOS population over time are a reflection of statutory modifications that affected the eligibility requirements. The average age at intake increased between 2006 and 2013, which was to be expected due to changes in 2010 statute that removed most juveniles ages 14 and 15 from direct file consideration⁴⁹ and the 2009 statutory modification that extended the age of sentencing to include 19 and 20 year olds.⁵⁰ In 2015, legislation was passed allowing the transfer of individuals up to age 24 from DOC to YOS.⁵¹

Prior to 2010 the average age at intake hovered around 17 years, but began to increase toward 18 in 2010 and further toward 19 through 2016 due to the influx of 20-year olds and a few 21- through 23- year old residents. In 2017 and 2018, however, the average age dropped back to 18 with relatively few of these older individuals admitted to YOS.

Table 3.2. Age at intake, FY 2006-2018

FY	N	Age at intake									Total
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	23	
2006	58	0.0%	3.4%	17.2%	36.2%	43.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2007	60	0.0%	6.7%	16.7%	38.3%	31.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2008	59	0.0%	6.8%	25.4%	35.6%	30.5%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2009	61	1.6%	4.9%	13.1%	45.9%	32.8%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2010	84	2.4%	4.8%	11.9%	26.2%	35.7%	16.7%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2011	68	0.0%	1.5%	10.3%	19.1%	29.4%	22.1%	14.7%	2.9%	0.0%	100.0%
2012	77	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	14.3%	31.2%	33.8%	16.9%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2013	45	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	33.3%	35.6%	26.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2014	52	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	7.7%	32.7%	28.8%	26.9%	1.9%	0.0%	100.0%
2015	58	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	34.5%	34.5%	22.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
2016	41	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	7.3%	22.0%	36.6%	26.8%	2.4%	2.4%	100.0%
2017	47	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	21.3%	21.3%	38.3%	12.8%	2.1%	0.0%	100.0%
2018	59	0.0%	1.7%	6.8%	23.7%	22.0%	25.4%	20.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	651	0.4%	1.8%	7.3%	19.5%	29.6%	25.0%	15.4%	0.9%	0.2%	100.0%

Data source: DOC data provided to DCJ for analysis.
The darker the color, the greater the proportion of individuals in the cell.

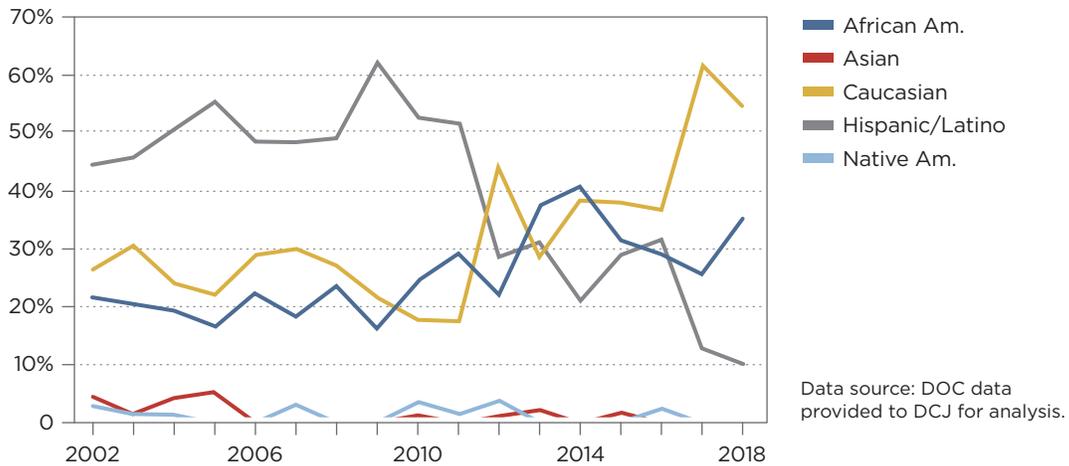
⁴⁹ C.R.S. §19-2-517.

⁵⁰ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407.

⁵¹ C.R.S. §18-1.3-407.5.

Prior to 2011, the largest proportion of the YOS population by far was Hispanic, followed by Caucasians and African Americans (see Figure 3.2). Since 2011, Hispanic admissions declined while African American and White admissions increased such that these groups represented fairly equal proportions of intakes through 2014. However, Caucasians have made up the largest proportion of intakes for the past four years.

Figure 3.2. Race and ethnicity of YOS intakes, FY 2002-2018 (N=1,014)



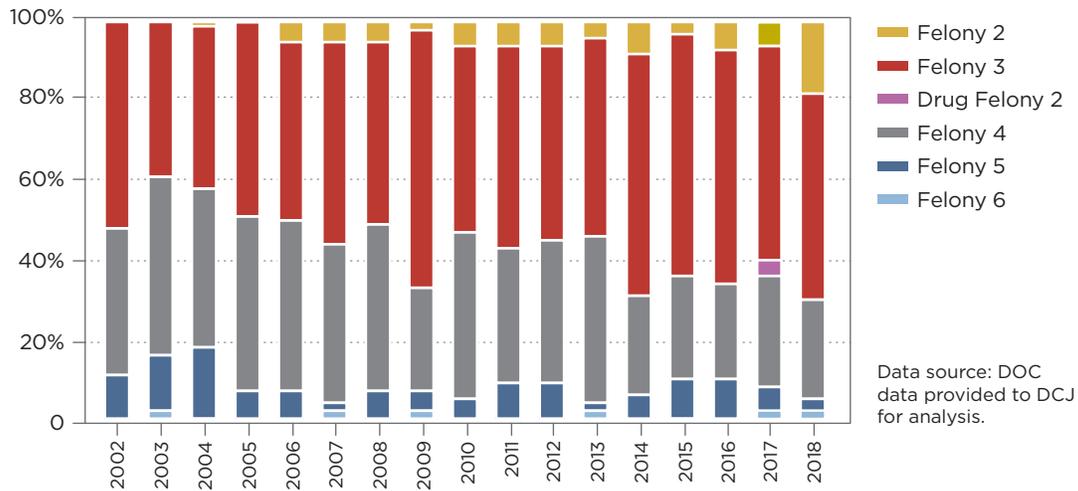
As shown in Table 3.3, the most common conviction crimes resulting in a YOS sentence since 2012 have been aggravated robbery, assault, and murder/homicide. A handful of youth have been admitted for burglary and drug crimes. Most of these crimes are class 3 and 4 felonies. Felony 5 or 6 crimes rarely result in a sentence to YOS. Additionally, there have been very few Felony 2 convictions resulting from a direct file (see Figure 3.3).

Table 3.3. Most serious conviction charge, FY 2012-2018

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
N	77	45	52	58	41	47	59
Accessory to a crime	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Arson	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Assault	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%
Assault 1st	11.7%	15.6%	17.3%	10.3%	19.5%	25.5%	20.3%
Assault 2nd	18.2%	24.4%	3.8%	13.8%	12.2%	14.9%	6.8%
Burglary	13.0%	2.2%	9.6%	8.6%	4.9%	2.1%	6.8%
Controlled substance	2.6%	2.2%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%
Court and corrections	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Escape	3.9%	0.0%	3.8%	1.7%	2.4%	2.1%	0.0%
Ethnic intimidation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Extortion	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Haras stalking w/ rest ord	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kidnapping	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%
Menacing	6.5%	0.0%	1.9%	3.4%	4.9%	2.1%	3.4%
Motor vehicle theft	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Murder	5.2%	2.2%	9.6%	10.3%	9.8%	8.5%	15.3%
Offenses relating to custody	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Organized crime	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other homicide	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other related homicide	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	1.7%	4.9%	2.1%	0.0%
Public Peace	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Robbery	2.6%	8.9%	5.8%	1.7%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Robbery (aggravated)	29.9%	35.6%	34.6%	41.4%	29.3%	27.7%	35.6%
Sexual assault	1.3%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	2.4%	2.1%	0.0%
Theft	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Weapons	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.7%
Wrongs to children	1.3%	2.2%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
Total	100.0%						

Data source: DOC data provided to DCJ for analysis.
The darker the color, the greater the proportion of individuals in the cell.

Figure 3.3. Felony class of most serious conviction crime for YOS intakes, FY 2002-2018 (N=1,014)



To identify areas of risk and need, YOS uses the Level of Service Inventory (LSI). The LSI is a 54 question semi-structured assessment measuring risk and protective factors in the areas of criminal history, substance abuse, education/employment, family, peer relationships, accommodation, and miscellaneous issues. Table 3.4 shows the average subscores for ten domains assessed by the LSI (the higher the score, the greater the need). YOS continues to serve a high-need population in terms of educational needs, and most have no positive and productive leisure time activities.

Table 3.4. Average subscores on the LSI for YOS intakes, FY 2016-2018

Scale	2016	2017	2018
N	41	62	60
Criminal history	40.7	45.6	45.5
Education/employment	74.1	72.6	73.3
Financial	40.2	54.1	55.8
Family/marital	22.6	31.1	31.3
Accommodation	69.4	65.2	68.0
Leisure/recreation	81.7	93.4	95.0
Companions	61.0	62.3	63.0
Alcohol/drug	39.2	43.0	49.7
Emotional/personal	27.8	27.9	31.1
Attitude/orientation	60.4	54.2	44.6
LSI total score*	26.6	28.5	29.3

Data source: DOC data provided to DCJ for analysis.

*For the total LSI score, DOC considers 0-12 low risk/need, 13-25 medium risk/need, and 25-54 high risk/need.

Other assessment instruments used by YOS also describe a high-need population. Table 3.5 outlines the academic status and needs of intakes over the past seven years. Note the proportion of those with a high school diploma or GED declined from over half to only 16.7% in 2018. Additionally, those considered functionally illiterate or illiterate in English represent an increasing proportion of the population, going from approximately a third of intakes to three-quarters in 2018.

However, upon further examination by YOS administrators, it became clear that, at intake, residents were not spending the time necessary to answer the questions on the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) accurately. Those with a high school diploma or GED, in particular, were completing the test in 10-15 minutes rather than the 90 minutes typically required. This calls into question the validity of the 2017 and 2018 information presented in Table 3.5. Fortunately, YOS uses additional assessment instruments to identify needs of offenders, including the Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI).

Table 3.5. Academic needs of YOS intakes, FY 2012-2018

FY	N	At Least High School Diploma or GED or higher	Needs GED	Functional illiterate/illiterate in English	Total
2012	72	50.0%	12.5%	37.5%	100.0%
2013	45	66.7%	2.2%	31.1%	100.0%
2014	47	53.2%	6.4%	40.4%	100.0%
2015	39	48.7%	12.8%	38.5%	100.0%
2016	34	35.3%	26.5%	38.2%	100.0%
2017	38	21.1%	10.5%	68.4%	100.0%
2018	48	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%	100.0%
Total	323	41.7%	11.3%	47.0%	100.0%

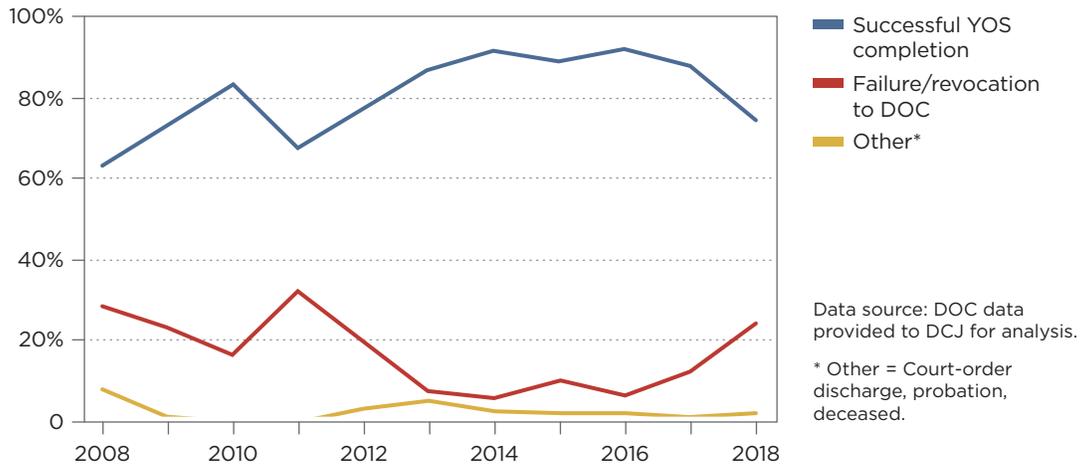
Data source: DOC data provided to DCJ for analysis.
The darker the color, the greater the proportion of individuals in the cell.

3. What is the program completion rate of YOS participants? What is the new filing rate of individuals released from YOS since 1995?

► What is the program completion rate of YOS participants?

Across the 10 years prior to FY 2013, success rates averaged 72.5%. However, this increased to 87.0% in FY 2013, and remained around 90.0% through FY 2017. However, successful terminations dropped to 75.0% in FY 2018 (see Figure 3.4). According to YOS administrators, this decline is likely due to policy changes wherein behavior previously resulting in a temporary regression may now result in a permanent revocation to DOC. If this is the case, this reduction in the number of successful terminations can be expected to continue in upcoming years.

Figure 3.4. YOS termination types, FY 2008-2018 (N=643)



► *What is the new filing rate of individuals released from YOS since FY 1995?*

Of 1,091 individuals who have successfully completed YOS since its inception on July 1, 1995, and who have had at least two years of time at risk in the community, 55.5% received a new felony or misdemeanor filing within two years following their discharge. Of these, about one-quarter (24.8%) actually received a felony conviction (see Table 3.6). About one in ten (11.6%) of those successfully released were convicted of a new violent felony crime within two years. Please note that prior to 2016, YOS evaluations excluded filings in Denver County Court. In addition, traffic cases involving misdemeanors such as DUI/DWAI are included in the analyses presented here, whereas prior YOS evaluations did not include these types of cases because of data system capacity limitations. Therefore, the recidivism filing rate reported here can be expected to be higher than pre-2016 reports.

Table 3.6. Successful YOS releases, 2-year post-release recidivism

	New misdemeanor or felony filing*		New felony conviction		New violent felony conviction**	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
No	486	44.5%	820	75.2%	964	88.4%
Yes	605	55.5%	271	24.8%	127	11.6%
Total	1,091	100.0%	1,091	100.0%	1,091	100.0%

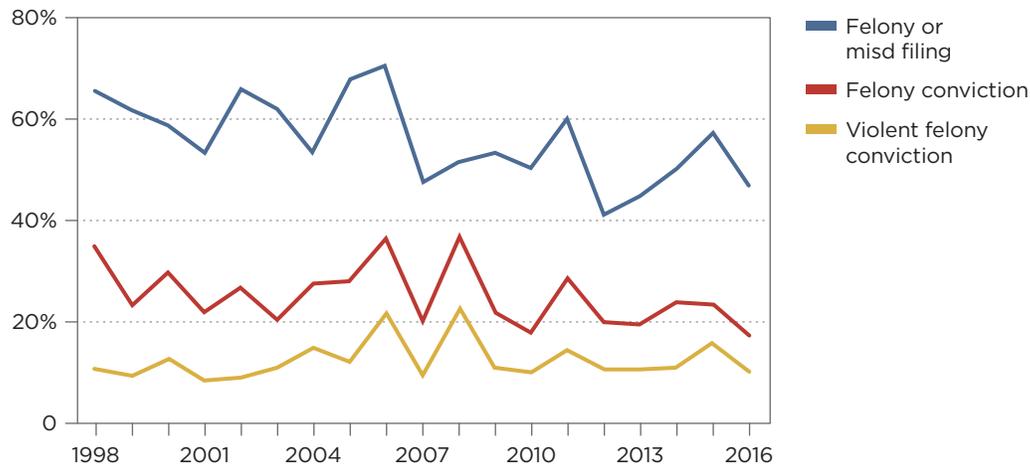
Data source: Court records were extracted from Judicial Branch's Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) information management system via the Colorado Justice Analytics Support System (CJASS) and analyzed by DCJ.

*Denver County Court data are included here. Note prior YOS evaluations excluded filings in Denver County Court. Additionally, traffic cases involving misdemeanors such as DUI/DWAI are included, whereas prior YOS evaluations did not include these types of cases because of system capacity limitations. Therefore, the new filing rate reported here can be expected to be higher than pre-2016 reports.

**Crimes included are homicide (including manslaughter, vehicular homicide, criminally negligent homicide, child abuse causing death), felony assault (including 1st and 2nd degree assault, vehicular assault, felony menacing, felony stalking, felony child abuse, witness intimidation), kidnapping, robbery, weapons, sexual assault, and other sex crimes.

To explore the rate of recidivism over time, Figure 3.5 shows the two-year filing/conviction rate for those released between 1998 and 2016. Since 1998, the new felony/misdemeanor filing rate shows a downward trend, with the felony conviction trending slightly downward as well. With the exception of a few spikes, the violent felony conviction rate has hovered at or just above 10%.

Figure 3.5. Percent of successful releases with new filing or conviction within 2 years, by type, 1998-2016 (N=1051)



Data source: Court records were extracted from Judicial Branch’s Integrated Colorado Online Network (ICON) information management system via the Colorado Justice Analytics Support System (CJASS) and analyzed by DCJ.

*Denver County Court data are included here. Note prior YOS evaluations excluded filings in Denver County Court. Additionally, traffic cases involving misdemeanors such as DUI/DWAI are included, whereas prior YOS evaluations did not include these types of cases because of system capacity limitations. Therefore, the new filing rate reported here can be expected to be higher than pre-2016 reports.

**Crimes included are homicide (including manslaughter, vehicular homicide, criminally negligent homicide, child abuse causing death), felony assault (including 1st and 2nd degree assault, vehicular assault, felony menacing, felony stalking, felony child abuse, witness intimidation), kidnapping, robbery, weapons, sexual assault, and other sex crimes.

These recidivism rates are very encouraging, particularly the 11.6% rate of new violent crime convictions, given that most YOS sentences were the result of a violent crime, and considering the very high level of needs in this population.

Additional findings

Organization in transition in 2016

The 2016 YOS evaluation was conducted at a time of considerable change, and this was particularly noticeable among administrative/management personnel. As one staff member put it in 2016, *“This survey comes at a time of flux & change. Staff are nervous for the future.”*

To better understand the current organizational culture, two staff survey questions are explored below. As shown in Table 3.7, the survey captured perceptions by staff regarding whether there was a consistent philosophy between facility administrators and the line staff who work directly with residents. Whereas more than three out of 4 (77.2%)⁵² staff surveyed in 2014 reported at least a somewhat consistent philosophy existed, only 54.6% of those surveyed in 2016 felt the same. However, that figure increased to 71.1% in 2018, suggesting that the philosophical alignment has improved since 2016 (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7. Do you think there is a consistent philosophy between facility administrators and line staff?

	2014 survey results	2016 survey results	2018 survey results
Yes	42.1%	17.3%	42.1%
Somewhat	35.1%	37.3%	29.0
Not really	15.8%	24.5%	15.0
No	7.0%	20.9%	13.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	99.1%*

Source: Survey of YOS staff administered by DCJ.

*One respondent reported that they didn't know the answer to this question.

Some comments from staff revealed various concerns about a shift in philosophy that accompanied the organizational changes.

There have been some program changes that staff who have been at YOS for a long time are working to understand the reasoning behind. Once they understand the philosophy, change is implemented.

I feel the objectives for YOS are clear across the board and that line staff understand the expectations put out from admin.

Staff want to help and the management team wants to warehouse.

We are under a new management that have different views but they understand the direction YOS has to go and they are keeping vital parts of YOS intact.

Communication between facility administration and YOS line staff is consistent. HQ does not care about YOS and it's my opinion they are working toward making YOS the same as every other adult facility.

⁵² This compares to 86% of staff respondents who participated in the 2012 evaluation.

Administration doesn't recognize daily struggles and their decisions have a tendency to override line staff efforts. Administration needs to spend a little more time in staff areas and interacting with offenders who aren't in trouble, as well as their line staff.

The improvement in the view of philosophical consistency may be linked to the improvement in morale among YOS staff respondents. In 2016, few (18.3%) of the staff surveyed considered the morale among YOS employees to be good or very good, whereas almost a third (30.2%) said that morale was poor or very poor (see Table 3.8). This was in striking contrast to the findings of DCJ's 2014 evaluation, in which nearly two thirds (63.4%) of the staff respondents reported that morale was good or very good, while less than 10% said that morale was poor or very poor. In 2018, 43.2% of staff considered morale to be good or very good and 24.9% thought it was poor or very poor. Morale appears to have improved since the 2016 evaluation but remains considerably lower than the 2014 findings.

Table 3.8. YOS staff perceptions of morale

	2014 survey results	2016 survey results	2018 survey results
Very good	19.1%	2.4%	8.1%
Good	44.3%	15.9%	35.1%
OK	27.0%	51.6%	31.5%
Poor	8.7%	21.4%	18.9%
Very poor	0.9%	8.7%	6.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Survey of YOS staff administered by DCJ.

Comments from staff who reported lower morale provide some insight into the array of issues that can affect morale, including organizational change.

Staff morale is higher than when I started. Due to the admin change we are starting to hold offenders more accountable but we have a way to go.

With short staffing after the loss of several co-workers I believe the staff morale is low.

Staff sometimes feel they do not have a voice.

There are a lot of complaints about YOS from staff... is it a prison or a program?

Many changes have taken place over the past years. Many staff are not trained in juvenile behavior.

Many changes are taking place and they don't always make sense. These changes are not explained and they significantly impact the program. Decisions about education are being made by people with no educational background.

Decisions made by HQ executive staff to completely change (destroy) the mission and purpose of YOS has resulted in a very low morale for most staff.

Not enough staff. Not enough pay. Not enough room.

Management watch staff for violations more than they do the offenders. A lot of staff walk around on egg shells since management is quick to put blame on staff.

Our upper management only want to destroy YOS and what it is supposed to be accomplishing.

Changes have been made to turn YOS further away from its original purpose and more in line with adult DOC. Program is GONE!

Despite the somewhat lower level of morale at YOS, most staff reported that they feel equipped to work with this population. A majority of YOS staff (74.5%, down from 82.0% in 2016) respondents stated that they felt their education or experience adequately prepared them to work with this population, and 75.7% had taken specialized training to work with youthful offenders since they started working at YOS. YOS provides a 40-hour orientation training curriculum which includes a focus on youth development. Administrators are planning to implement an expanded 8-hour annual training requirement that focuses on youth development and the use of COPDs and cognitive sanctions to promote long term behavior change.

When asked what additional training would be useful, staff most frequently mentioned the topics of communication skills, gangs, and juvenile development/cognition.

The importance of education

Both staff and residents acknowledge the value of the educational and technical programs at YOS. Nearly two out of three (63.8%) resident respondents reported that the educational opportunities were the best thing about YOS. Nearly half (49.7%) of residents reported that the vocational and work opportunities were the most useful programs. When asked what activities or programs have been most useful or important to residents, education and vocational training was consistently mentioned:

I chose YOS for the reduced time as well as the educational opportunities offered here.

For the education and didn't want to do 14 years. I wanted to be helped. Wanted to change.

The main reason I came to YOS was to get as much education as I can to make my transition as a law abiding citizen as smooth as possible.

I came to YOS over adult prison due to the chance at a better education as well as a lesser DOC sentence. I also did it for the contact visits such as family day, considering my two kids this was very important.

I chose YOS over adult prison for the education that was offered here.

The education program was phenomenal when I first got here and has put me in a position to where I don't have to take risks when I get out.

I feel the business classes are helping me to prepare for my future.

In addition, residents were asked if (and why) they would choose YOS again. Just over two-thirds (69.8%) reported that they would choose YOS again; among these, 55.8% said this was due to the shorter sentence, while 40.4% said it was due to the education and programming available. One-quarter (25.0%) of those who would choose YOS again said it was to improve their lives. Many appreciated the opportunities YOS provides this population:

YOS has helped me identify the thoughts and criminal behaviors that got me where I am today. In adult prison I don't think this could've happened.

I got to experience a lot of different trades and received my high school diploma.

Because I've been able to enroll into college classes here and I've learned to play the guitar.

The opportunity to better my education. I have a second chance at life on the street.

I've seen the programs here and they provide us with college courses, jobs, tools that would contribute into our lives outside of here.

I would choose YOS because I've accomplished a lot due to their education opportunities.

College classes, vocational and self-help classes are very important because it prepares you for your re-entry back into society.

With the disbanding of the high school curriculum, additional CTE programs have been added, including introduction to carpentry/construction, a permanent YOS welding lab, and core curriculum night courses (e.g. English composition, Algebra, Speech). YOS administrators are also considering establishing a Gladiator Training Program for Phase II residents which will provide individuals with an in-depth, visual and hands-on experience of the concrete reinforcing "ironworking" trade. At the completion of this class residents will have an opportunity to become certified, unionized, trained iron workers.

YOS administrators continue to maintain excellent relationships with approximately 20 community stakeholders which impacts Phase I, Phase II and Phase III residents. Community partners include Vestas, Everest Steel, Work Force, Express Personnel, Denver Works, CO Springs, Servicios De la Raza, Co Hazard Control, Pueblo Community College, Administrators Pueblo D60, Colorado Construction Careers, Colorado Prestress, Shisler Concrete, PWAG, Phil Long Ford, Colorado Truck Driving School, May Trucking and Red Rocks Community College Gateway Program.

Safety

One question in the resident survey asked “Do you feel safe at YOS?” Nearly eighty-nine percent (88.8%) of survey respondents reported that they felt safe or somewhat safe at YOS⁵³ (see Table 3.9). This compares to 86.1% in 2014 (this question was not asked in 2016). The questionnaire asked the reasons for the answer selected. In open-ended responses, 51.9% of respondents said that self-reliance and the ability to defend themselves made them feel safe. Nearly 11% of respondents said that some staff made them feel safe. When asked another open-ended question about what made them feel unsafe and, among those who answered this question, 16.5% said “some residents” and 33.9% said “some staff.” Overall, however, few residents mentioned concerns about safety.

Table 3.9. Do you feel safe at YOS?

	2014 survey results (n=79)*	2018 survey results (n=142)
Yes	64.6%	59.9%
Somewhat	21.5%	28.9%
Not really	10.1%	7.0%
No	3.8%	4.2%

*Note that in 2014 the response rate was 42% compared to 88% in 2018. Results from the 2016 evaluation are unavailable because this question was not included in the questionnaire.

Security changes

Physical changes have been made since the 2016 evaluation to strengthen security. Housing pods were secured with individual pod doors and windows were installed between the day halls and staff offices to provide additional observation. Cameras were placed in every offender room in Building 8 (the main building which houses residents) with a large monitor in the staff office. Now every room has a camera except the showers. Lockable footlockers were also installed on each bed and the furniture in the rooms has been secured to the floor.

⁵³ This compares to 86% in 2014.

Since the 2016 report, YOS conducted an internal housing evaluation and that, along with PREA requirements, prompted the reorganization of housing pods including the creation of one specifically for those under 18 years old. This population now has their own wing which includes two housing rooms (which can accommodate five residents each), their own bathroom, shower and small day hall. Additionally, a dedicated staff member has been assigned to supervise, escort and monitor the under age 18 population.

Another pod was also established for the new residents transferring from intake at IDO. Those residents are housed together on Orientation Level for two weeks before mixing with the full population. The creation of this new transitional pod has helped reduce fighting, according to administrators.

Another positive addition was the creation of de-escalation rooms which administrators report have been an effective tool for conflict management. There's a de-escalation room in Building 8 where a majority of the residents are housed, and also one in the women's housing unit.

Other improvements to the physical space

Evaluations in 2012, 2014 and 2016 all called for administrators to make every possible effort to either acquire more usable space on the YOS campus and/or to maximize the current available space. Improvements were made to the physical grounds after each of those evaluations, with the most notable improvement between the 2016 evaluation and this report. The long-awaited multi-purpose building was completed in July 2017 which resulted in significant, positive changes for YOS. The new building added 13,941 square feet of usable space and includes:

- A fully functioning gymnasium used for both recreational purposes and for events such as IDO graduations
- An indoor workout room with cardio machines and weights which allows for workout options in colder months
- A music room
- A library
- A law library
- A barber shop with cosmetology classrooms
- A game room (for Phoenix level residents only)
- Offices
- Restrooms
- Storage areas

Building 26, which houses the Phase II and female offenders, also received updates including the addition of a walking track, basketball court, volleyball court, and stationary equipment.

Additionally, a new child-friendly area was created in the visiting room which offers and encourages a place for residents to play and interact with their young children.

Programming for females

YOS continues to make efforts to ensure compliance with the statute regarding access to comparable programs, recreation and education for the female residents. Regarding education, GED instruction is available to all YOS residents including the women. Females also have access to post-secondary core classes offered in the evenings, cosmetology, and video-conferencing is available for women to participate in graphic arts and business courses. When asked if they would still choose YOS over adult prison, five of the seven women in YOS indicated they would still choose to come to YOS rather than DOC. Six of the seven mentioned the educational opportunities as being the most useful and best things about YOS.

Since the 2016 report, a driving simulator and two welding simulators have been installed in the women's housing unit in Building 26. As of July 2018, all of the women at YOS had completed both the welding and machining labs through Pueblo Community College, which gives them in the same certificate standing as the men. Additionally, everyone in Phase I, including the women, have access to a simulator forklift certificate.

As for recreation, in the past two years Building 26 (which includes housing for the women and Phase II residents) has seen improvements including the addition of a walking track, stationary equipment and a basketball court. The women also have access to the new multi-purpose building twice a week.

One of the criticisms from the women during past evaluations was that they did not have the same opportunity as the men to have jobs to make money inside the facility. In the past two years a few work opportunities have been made available to the women including janitorial jobs in the administrative buildings. The required separation of men and women inside the facility continues to impede and restrict the possibility of work in other areas like the kitchen and library.

Despite these improvements, the women report feeling "locked up" in Building 26, and continue to express the need for greater parity with the men.

Mail room

Many residents expressed frustration with not receiving mail in a timely fashion. Problems with the "mail room" were frequently mentioned in the survey's open-ended questions. While details were not provided, several residents stated that mail was often delivered two weeks late.

Youth transfers

In 2015, the General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 182 which allows for the identification and placement of certain individuals who were directly sentenced to prison to be placed in YOS if DOC administrators believe they could benefit from the program. Fourteen residents were Youthful Transfers at the time of data collection, and all participated in the survey. According to data obtained from YOS administrators, between January 2016 and early October 2018, 50 DOC inmates agreed to participate in YOS as Youthful Transfers; 16 were later returned to DOC, 10 at the request of the offender and 6 who were deemed no longer appropriate for YOS programming. As of October 2018, 21 were granted parole, released to community corrections, or granted early release by the Parole Board. It is noteworthy that the Youthful Transfers were granted these releases at their first board appearance because all had completed their GED, participated in required programming, participated in prerelease activities via Phase III, and had acceptable parole plans.

Conclusion

In sum, the YOS operations are generally consistent with statute and likely represent the intent of the drafters of the original YOS legislation. Data collected during this evaluation shows improvement in a number of areas over the 2016 outcomes, which reflected tensions due to organizational change. As with prior evaluation findings, education/vocational training is valued by both staff and residents; 71.2% of residents said they would choose YOS again, often because of these opportunities. YOS administrators continue to expand the programming, including for the women residents, and the opening of the multipurpose building has further enhanced these efforts.

The majority of YOS staff (86.4%) reported that they saw themselves as role models, and another 10.0% saw themselves as role models “sometimes.” With a strong staff and administration, and the continued expansion of programs and activities, YOS is positioned to positively impact the lives of many offenders. The proportion of offenders successfully completing their sentence at YOS remained around 90.0% between 2014 and 2017. This fell to 75% in 2018; YOS administrators believe this lower completion rate is due to two factors: a higher need population, and the implementation of greater accountability measures.⁵⁴ The two-year felony reconviction rate after program completion was 24.8%, and only 11.6% were reconvicted of a violent felony crime within 2 years. These are very positive outcomes, especially given the very serious nature of the YOS population.

⁵⁴ In addition, YOS underwent significant organizational changes beginning in 2016 which may have in part contributed to a lower program success rate. Individuals on Phase III, in the community, fail YOS if they commit a new crime; the most common new crime is escape according to the DOC’s FY17 Annual YOS report (see <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdoc/departmental-reports-and-statistics>).

Section 4:

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in this report, the following recommendations are presented:

1. **Education.** The average age of incoming YOS participants has been increasing as a result of statutory modifications regarding YOS eligibility. YOS intakes are now, on average, just over 18 years old. YOS administrators should continue their efforts, currently underway, to examine existing educational programming and staffing to ensure that it is relevant to an older population.

Additionally, YOS administrators should continue their efforts to expand programming related to parenting since many of the YOS residents are parents of young children. This includes exploring ways to expand parent/family engagement opportunities.

Finally, given the lack of reliability of the TABE score due to residents not accurately completing the assessment, efforts should be made to discontinue its use with this population, or to work closely with residents during testing to ensure the information they provide is accurate.

2. **Management and morale.** The turnover of management staff at YOS in 2016 resulted in an organization in transition, affecting communication and morale. While morale has improved since the 2016 evaluation, it has not rebounded to pre-transition levels. Administrators should continue current efforts to communicate their vision and expectations to line and program staff to ensure that staff morale and the YOS program mission are not compromised as YOS evolves.
3. **Sanctions and family contact.** Criminology research has found that family contact and support is a critical component of recidivism reduction. Administrators should encourage and promote family relationships, and should reconsider any sanction or earned “privilege” that limits family contact, in particular, phone contact.
4. **Mail.** Administrators should investigate and resolve issues related to the delays in receiving mail, as reported by residents.

5. **Women residents.** Despite substantial improvements in this area, programming for the women continues to challenge YOS. With the completion of the multipurpose building, efforts should continue to focus on expanding the women's access to programming and recreational activities.
6. **Community engagement.** The YOS management team should continue its work building and maintaining excellent relationships with community stakeholder employers who assist with job fairs, resume/interview skills, and hiring.

Appendix A:

Resident questionnaire

YOS Evaluation: Resident Survey

Please fill out the survey as honestly as possible and please write as neatly as you can.

1. Gender (please circle) a. Male b. Female

2. Age _____

3. I am (please circle the ONE you most identify with)
 - a. White
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. Black
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other

If you identify with more than one race/ethnicity please list the others here (excluding what you circled above):

4. How long have you been in YOS? _____ Years _____ Months
 - a. Did you transfer to YOS from DOC? ____ Yes ____ No

5. What was your original DOC sentence? _____ Years _____ Don't know

6. What is your YOS sentence? _____ Years

7. What level of privileges have you reached? (please circle ONE)
 - a. Orientation Level
 - b. Peer Level
 - c. Pledge Level 1
 - d. Pledge Level 2
 - e. Pledge Level 3
 - f. Pledge Level 4
 - g. Phoenix Level

8. Why did you choose YOS over adult prison?

9. If you could choose over again, would you still choose YOS? a. Yes b. No

What is the reason for your answer above?

10. Does your family participate in the program? a. Yes b. No

If yes, in what way does your family participate in YOS?

11. What YOS activities or programs have been most useful or important to you?

12. What kind of coping skills have you learned to help manage stress and anger?

13. If you had the opportunity to use drugs today, would you? a. Yes b. No
If yes, why?

14. Do you find working with your primary advisor helpful?

- a. Yes
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not Really
- d. No

15. Do you feel there are clear consequences for inappropriate behavior?

- a. Yes
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not Really
- d. No

16. Do you feel safe at YOS? a. Yes b. Somewhat c. Not really d. No

a. What makes you feel safe at YOS?

b. What makes you feel unsafe at YOS?

17. FEMALES ONLY: Is the video streaming of educational classes useful to you?

- a. Yes b. No

Why?

18. What employment do you plan to pursue after leaving YOS? _____ Don't Know

19. What parts of YOS are helping you to prepare for your future after YOS?

20. What do you feel are the BEST THINGS about YOS?

21. What do you feel are the WORST THINGS about YOS?

22. What suggestions do you have for improving YOS?

Thank you very much for your time completing this survey!

Appendix B:
Staff questionnaire

YOS Evaluation: Staff Survey

Instructions: Please complete the survey to the best of your knowledge. If a question does not pertain to you, please write N/A (not applicable) next to the question. If you need more room to write, feel free to use the back of the page.

- 1. Job title _____
- 2. Employment status: a. State employee b. Contract employee
- 3. Work shift: a. Day b. Swing c. Graveyard d. Administrative
- 4. Gender: a. Male b. Female
- 5. I am (please circle the ONE you most identify with)
 - a. White
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. Black
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other

If you identify with more than one race/ethnicity, please list the others here (excluding what you circled above):

- 6. Highest education
 - a. High school diploma
 - b. GED
 - c. Some college (including Associates degree)
 - d. College degree (including Bachelor's degree)
 - e. Some graduate school
 - f. Graduate degree

What was the focus/major of your highest degree? _____

- 7. How long have you been working with the Colorado DOC? ____years ____months
- 8. How long have you been working at the YOS? ____years ____months
- 9. Prior to this job, did you have experience working with juveniles?
 - a. Yes b. No

10. If yes, did this experience include juvenile offenders?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If applicable, describe the work you've previously done with juvenile offenders.

11. Do you feel that your education/experience adequately prepared you for working with this population?

- a. Yes
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not really
- d. No

What additional training would be useful?

12. Do you expect to finish your career at YOS?

- a. Yes
- b. Probably
- c. Maybe
- d. No

13. Do you see yourself as a role model for the YOS residents?

- a. Yes
- b. Sometimes
- c. Not really

14. Have you taken specialized training courses to work with youth offenders since beginning your work at YOS?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please list the topics you've taken training classes on

15. What areas are you interested in learning about (or learning more about) in regard to working with offenders in this age group?

16. How would you describe the current level of staff morale at YOS?
a. Very poor b. Poor c. OK d. Good e. Very good

Please explain your answer.

17. Do you think there is adequate communication across **shifts and phases**?

- a. Yes b. somewhat c. not really d. No

Please explain your answer.

18. Do you think there is adequate communication between **staff and administration**?

- a. Yes b. somewhat c. not really d. No

Please explain your answer.

19. Do the goals and philosophies of YOS differ from those of DOC?

- a. Yes b. No

If yes, please describe how they differ.

20. Do you think there is a consistent philosophy between facility administrators and line staff who work directly with residents (note, this is separate from communication referred to in Question 15)?

- a. Yes b. Somewhat c. Not really d. No

Please explain your answer.
