

Examining Whether Integrating Early Intervention Services into a Specialized Court Improves the Well-Being of Justice-Involved Young Adult Men: A Randomized Controlled Trial

County Name: Orange

Total Amount Requested: Not to exceed \$12,000,000

Duration of Project: 5 years

General Requirement:

- Makes a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health, including but not limited to, application to a different population

Primary Purpose:

- Increases access to mental health services to underserved groups
- Promotes interagency and community collaboration related to Mental Health Services or supports or outcomes

PRIMARY PROBLEM

The collateral costs of having a felony conviction are huge. In California alone, the National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction (NICCC) estimates that there are nearly 700 collateral consequences attached to a felony conviction (NICCC, 2017). For instance, individuals with a felony conviction can lose the right to vote, be ineligible for employment in the public sector, denied occupational licenses, denied welfare assistance, restricted from living in public housing and turned away from financial aid.

The threshold for triggering collateral consequences attached to felony theft in California is the difference between stealing property worth at least \$950 and property worth \$949 or less. Thus, a single dollar can differentiate being denied public housing, employment and educational opportunities for a young adult. Ironically, young adults with a felony are denied the very resources that would facilitate healthy, prosocial reintegration with society and keep them from reoffending. For example, finding quality employment is one of the strongest predictors of desistance from crime, yet individuals with a felony conviction have severely limited access to stable employment (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 1993).

It is well known that a prior felony conviction can significantly impede an individual's ability to reintegrate into society after involvement with the justice system. A felony record may severely limit eligibility for necessary occupational licenses, access to public assistance, the ability to find safe housing, and access to financial support for higher education (e.g., Chesney-Lind & Mauer, 2003; Love et al., 2013; Oyama, 2009; Travis, 2005). Ironically, the milestones that are difficult to achieve *because* of a prior felony conviction are powerful tools for *preventing* future criminal behavior. Given that young adults of color are more likely to be arrested and charged with felonies (in addition to facing other types of discrimination), a prior felony conviction may contribute to substantial racial and ethnic disparities across the life-course (Pager, 2003; Pager et al., 2009) that can have profound impacts on their overall life trajectories and health and well-being.

One reason that the criminal justice system has difficulty reducing recidivism or treating the mental health and substance use problems among young adults is because it was not designed to meet the specific developmental or mental health needs of this population. Rigorous studies suggest that young adults might be more similar to adolescents than older adults in terms of behavior, maturity, development and potential for rehabilitation. For example, neuroscientific studies show that the brain continues to mature well into the mid-twenties (Casey et al., 2011; Casey et al., 2005; Casey et al., 2008; Giedd et al., 1999; Simmonds et al., 2017). Furthermore, psychological assessments show that adolescents and young adults alike are less able to exercise self-control (Konrad et al., 2013; Shulman et al., 2015), and place substantially more weight on the immediate rewards than on the costs attached to behavior (Casey et al., 2011; Richards et al., 2012; Romer et al., 2017; Shulman et al., 2016) than older adults. Taken together, young adults, just like adolescents, may make more impulsive decisions, be less culpable for their actions, and be more amenable to treatment and rehabilitation than older adults.

Although robust developmental and neuroscientific evidence suggests that young adults are more similar to adolescents than adults, the justice system typically treats anyone 18 or older under the broad auspice of the adult criminal justice system. Even though there is nothing transformative about turning 18, young adults are traditionally processed and sanctioned with the same retributive rules and regulations that apply to mature adults. This likely results in a “developmental mismatch” between the needs and capabilities of young adulthood and the ways in which the legal system treats them. Furthermore, young adulthood is a sensitive period of development during which individuals must navigate critical transitions in several domains (e.g., education, employment, housing, partnerships, social networks, parenthood), which may be particularly challenging for young adults who have a felony on their record or are living with untreated mental health conditions. In addition, many justice-system-involved young adults have serious pre-existing risk factors for a variety of psychosocial and health-related problems, such as a history of trauma and violence exposure; low socioeconomic status and inadequate access to resources; substance abuse; pre-existing mental health conditions; serious emotional disturbances, and history of traumatic brain injuries (Bridwell & Macdonald, 2014; Chassin et al., 2010; Davis & VanderStoep, 1997; Lynam et al., 2000; Schubert et al., 2011; Shulman et al., 2021; Wolff et al., 2013). For example, one study of justice-system-involved adolescent boys found that 73% of the participants had witnessed a serious violent event prior to study initiation and 64% were the direct victim of serious violence before participating in the study (Shulman et al., 2021). Another study with a different justice-system-involved sample of adolescents found that approximately 58% met the criteria for a mental health condition (Schubert et al., 2011).

Thus, there is a critical need to target individualized, wrap-around resources for this population to prevent sustained recidivism and justice system involvement, prevent the onset or worsening of serious mental health and substance use conditions, and promote long-term positive socio-economic outcomes.

Background: The Current Young Adult Court and YAC Study

Young Adult Court

The YAC in Orange County is a specialized pilot court designed to address the criminogenic needs of young adults ages 18-25 years while holding them accountable in a developmentally appropriate way. It is supported through an interagency collaboration involving the Court, District Attorney’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, Probation Department, community service providers and the University of California at Irvine (UCI). A major accomplishment of this pilot was building relationships among the collaborating agencies and coming to inter-agency agreements on terms and conditions for eligibility criteria and dismissal/reduction of charges. The work of the YAC agencies is supported through in-kind staffing from the respective partner agencies.

Existing RCT Research Pilot

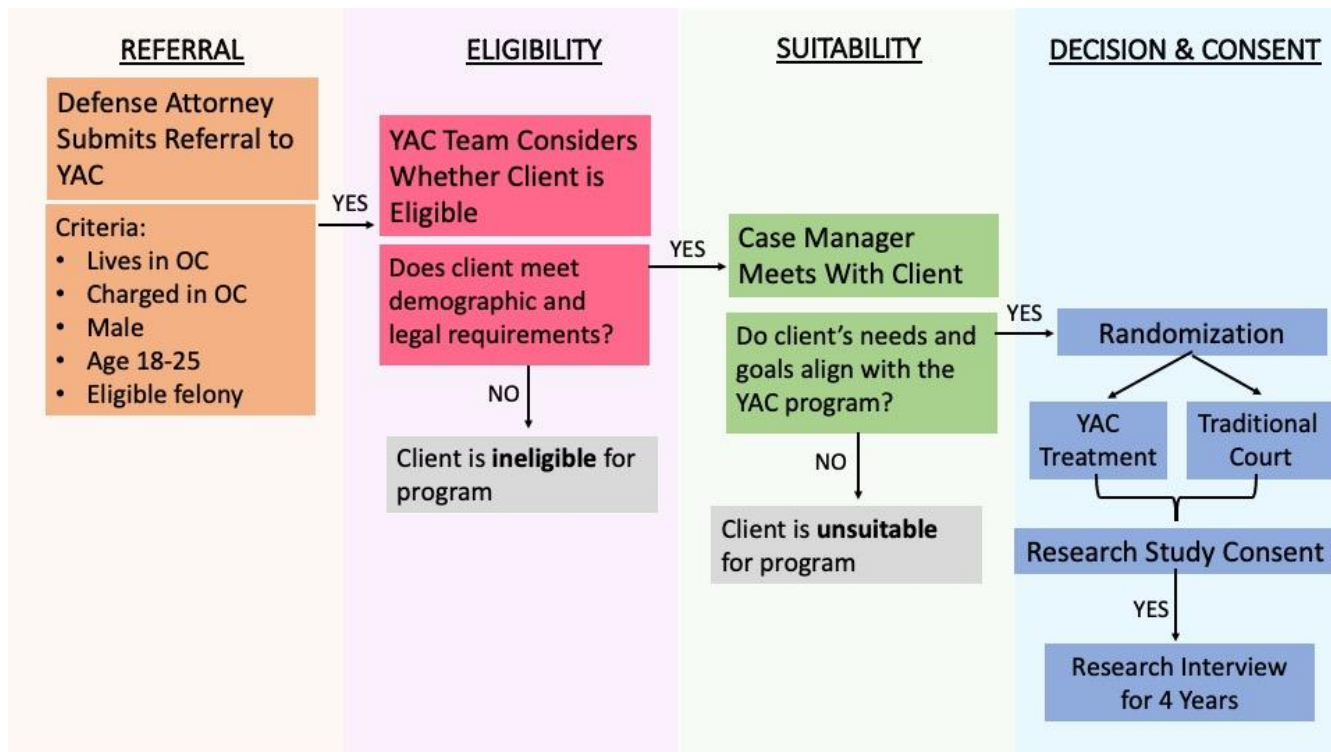
The current research pilot is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) designed to evaluate whether young men who are processed through the specialized YAC experience better outcomes around recidivism, employment, educational attainment, and developmental outcomes. Because the number of eligible and suitable young men exceeds the current capacity of the YAC, randomization is the only ethical and fair way to decide which young men can participate in the court. In addition, before the District Attorney’s office will agree to remove felonies from someone’s criminal record, a rigorous and methodologically sound empirical evaluation needs to be conducted. An RCT affords the rare and unique opportunity to rigorously evaluate whether the YAC is related to better long-term outcomes than traditional court processing. Upon evidence that the YAC’s is effective, the long-term goal is to eventually open the YAC to all eligible and suitable young men.

The YAC research team at UCI designed the study methodology, received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, set up the project infrastructure and launched the pilot study, thus demonstrating implementation feasibility of an RCT within the Court/Justice setting. The current research study is funded through grants from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and Community Action Partnership of Orange County (CAPOC) that end in May (CAPOC) and December (NIJ) 2022.

RCT Pilot Referral, Screening and Randomization Process

Defense attorneys refer justice-involved young men who meet screening criteria. The YAC team then determines whether the referred individual is eligible and suitable using criteria established by the District Attorney. After an individual and his case are determined to be eligible and suitable for the YAC, they are randomly selected and assigned into one of the YAC Study conditions: YAC Treatment or Traditional Court.

Overview of the RCT Referral, Screening Process



Informed Consent and Court Assignment Process

A key aspect of how the RCT Research Pilot ensures that a person can make a fully informed choice about whether they would like to participate in the study is that the young men are first notified about whether

they have been randomized into the YAC Treatment or the Traditional Court condition and *then* asked whether they would like to participate in the RCT pilot itself and complete the informed consent process. The young men also have the option to participate in the Young Adult Court without having to participate in the YAC RCT pilot (although almost all men in the YAC to date have agreed to participate in the research study).

RCT Research Pilot Participant Interviews

All young men who consent to be in the RCT research pilot, whether they are assigned to Traditional Court or the YAC Treatment condition, receive identical treatment as a study participant. This means that all young men complete interviews on the same pre-planned interview timeline across the 3-year study period. These interviews are conducted individually by a trained research staff and include questions about all aspects of the young men's lives (e.g., attitudinal, psychological, mental and physical health, health care utilization, behavioral, substance use, family/peer relationships). Interviews are conducted on the following schedule:



These one-on-one interviews between research team members and the young men in both groups will be conducted in the community, jail facilities or virtually. For those assigned to the YAC treatment group, participants will complete brief (approximately 10-minute) in-court interviews after appearing in front of the YAC judge to assess their subjective experience of the court (e.g., whether they felt that their voice was heard, whether their case was processed fairly, whether they were treated with respect), whether they faced any barriers to attending court, and whether they currently have a safe/stable place to live.

RCT Pilot Study Conditions

Traditional Court. The young men who are assigned to Traditional Court are processed through traditional channels, including the typical case management and referral process to community-based resources that are currently being provided). **Importantly, no participant in the Traditional Court group is denied or intentionally delayed from being referred to needed services.** Rather, as their needs, if any, are identified, they are referred to existing community resources and receive traditional case management. The young men in Traditional Court who are invited to participate in the research study are treated exactly the same in all research procedures.

YAC Intervention. The young men who are assigned to the YAC (regardless of whether they consent to be in the study) are connected to the YAC team. Together, the YAC team and young men develop a “youth action plan.” This action plan lays out the steps the young men must complete to qualify for having all felony charges reduced or dismissed at the end of their YAC involvement. Currently, these steps include attending all court hearings and meeting with probation officers and, in addition, meeting with case managers (which is unique to YAC) on a consistent basis.

When support for addressing mental health or co-occurring substance use concerns, increasing life skills, and/or meeting basic needs (i.e., housing support, transportation assistance, basic hygiene and life skills, family and parenting support, employment and education assistance) is identified in their plan, the YAC team strives to link the young men to services available within the community. Early in the pilot, the team realized the number of men requiring support services and mental health/co-occurring treatment far exceeded what had been budgeted and planned for. The team was subsequently able to secure a short-term grant to cover

a portion of these costs and continually searches for donations to try and meet the remaining needs. Another issue the YAC team has noted is that very few connect to community-based behavioral health services, despite reminders and encouragement.

For more information about what the current YAC looks like, please view this video produced by UCI:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGzs5g3l2hM>

PROJECT PROPOSAL

This project proposes to make a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health. It will accomplish this by leveraging an interagency collaboration of justice partners to integrate early intervention mental health services into Orange County's existing Young Adult Court (YAC).

This project also offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the long-term impact of the newly integrated services and the overall Young Adult Court at reducing recidivism and improving health and wellbeing outcomes through an established randomized controlled trial research design. Drawing upon the learnings from the pilot study, this project will expand and improve the original RCT design (and, thus, any conclusions able to be drawn on the impact of the YAC intervention over Traditional Court), by increasing the number of young men who participate in the enhanced YAC RCT Study and extending the follow-up evaluation period. Because an important element of the YAC is the dismissal or reduction of all prior felony charges after successful completion of YAC programming, data from the extended follow up period will play a critical role in influencing whether the Court and District Attorney's office continue to support the charge dismissals and reductions offered through the YAC.

Lessons from the current YAC pilot. The young men currently enrolled in the YAC pilot have significant histories of mental health need and/or risk factors. Almost 76% of the pilot sample has witnessed a serious violent event, been the victim of a violent event, or reports moderate to serious anxiety or depressive symptoms. Almost one quarter of the young men have seen someone get killed as a result of violence prior to joining the study. There is also substantial substance use among the young men (almost half have recently used non-marijuana drugs and over three-fourths have recently used marijuana). Thus, it has become clear that a critical part of the YAC rehabilitation, and the crux of this proposed project, is that the YAC intervention needs to include trauma-informed care and harm reduction strategies to address mental health and co-occurring conditions present among the young men in YAC.

How this INN project addresses these initial lessons learned. This project seeks to integrate a broad range of resources and supports designed to meet the holistic needs of the young men. While the pilot currently strives to provide needed supports, it was primarily designed (and funded) to link the young men to existing community-based supportive services. However, the young men's level of need for mental health, co-occurring and supportive services is significantly higher than what was planned for in the original pilot. Thus, the YAC team ends up having to rely on donations or in-kind services to support the young men, which makes their ability to provide consistent services that are appropriate for the young men's unique needs quite challenging. This is a limitation the current project proposes to address by adding and/or augmenting the availability of the following services and intentionally integrating them into the scope of the YAC team:

- Trauma-informed, early intervention mental health and co-occurring services (new)
 - Services will be field-based and include individual counseling, medication management and family-based services (when necessary). Therapists will participate in ongoing training

regarding the most up-to-date culturally-sensitive and evidenced-based trauma-informed care.

- Peer mentoring by YAC program graduates (new)
 - The Peer Mentoring program will be a new component of the YAC. In this program, graduates of the YAC will be paid to mentor young men who are newly accepted into the YAC. The YAC graduates will have very similar lived experiences as the newly accepted YAC young men, which will hopefully inspire and motivate the new YAC participants to do everything in their power to successfully “make it to the other side” (i.e., successfully graduate from the YAC).
- Apprenticeship programs (new)
 - Apprenticeship programs will involve collaborations between community members and young men in the YAC. Interested community member will spend a few hours each week teaching the young men about the day-to-day operations of their trade, business, etc. Based on previously stated interests of the young men in the YAC, the project anticipates approaching small business owners, tattoo artists, chefs, and barber/stylists.
- Financial literacy courses (new)
 - Financial literacy courses will teach the young men a variety of financial skills that are designed to promote sustained self-sufficiency. The courses will cover topics such as opening a bank account, making a budget, understanding loans/credit cards/interests, and protecting against identify theft.
- Scholarships to pursue degrees and certifications (expanded from pilot)
 - Given that education and employment are strong predictors of desistance and self-sufficiency, scholarships will be available to YAC men to attend traditional (e.g., AA degrees) and non-traditional/trade/vocational schools (e.g., electrical technology; culinary arts; automotive technology).
- Childcare resources (new)
 - Many of the young men in the program are fathers. Parenting classes as well as childcare support will be offered to help these young men become proactively involved in their children’s lives.
- Housing and transportation vouchers (expanded from pilot)
- Other services tailored to the young adult’s needs (new)

A critical enhancement will be to ensure that the array of services and supports available is responsive to the needs and preferences of the young men, whether based on life experiences, educational/employment histories, cultural backgrounds, etc. For example, culture and familial norms are (and will be) considered when developing treatment plans and assessing risks, needs, and strengths. The study team and service providers will also continue to make a concerted effort to recruit team members who are fluent in Spanish, given that many of the men in the study (and their families) are native Spanish speakers.

PROJECT EVALUATION STRATEGY AND LEARNING GOALS

It will improve upon the original pilot design by enrolling an additional 200 young men into the YAC RCT Study (for a total sample size of 300) and by increasing the prospective outcomes measurement from three to four years after joining the court (either YAC or Traditional). Collectively, these improvements will allow for a more robust empirical evaluation that will help determine whether positive outcomes, if any, are sustained long-term.

Target Population

Young adults are eligible for the Orange County YAC if they are 18 to 25 years old, male, live in and charged in Orange County, and charged with an eligible felony offense. ***Study eligibility criteria were determined by the Court and District Attorney's Office and cannot be adjusted for this project.***

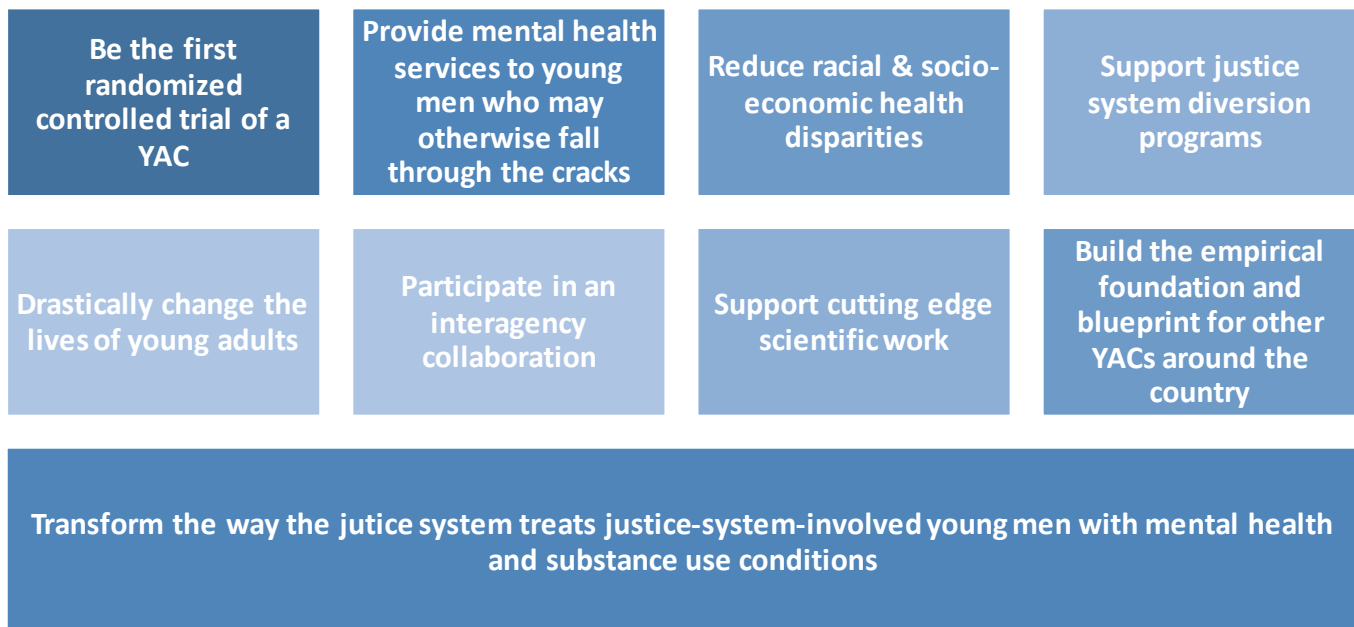
In addition to their significant co-occurring psychosocial, mental health and substance use needs described above, the young men are diverse (46% Latino; 20% Mixed; 17% Black; 7% White; 10% Other) and come from predominantly disadvantaged backgrounds.

The YAC focuses on young adult (18-to-25-year-old) men for several reasons:

- Young adult men are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and generally have high rates of recidivism (Alper et al., 2018; Carson & Golinelli, 2013)
- Although justice-system-involved young adults have a variety of mental health and substance use needs (Bridwell & Macdonald, 2014; Chassin et al., 2010; Davis & Vander Stoep, 1997; Schubert et al., 2011; Wolff et al., 2013), they are highly underserved in the community while under probation (White, 2019) and after they age out of child-based services (Copeland et al., 2015)
- Mental health and substance use disorders often peak during young adulthood (SAMHSA, 2013a, 2013b), which makes it a critical time for early identification and intervention
- Although research from a variety of fields (e.g., neuroscience, cognitive science, psychobiology, psychology) suggests that significant maturation occurs during young adulthood and that young adults may be developmentally more similar to adolescents than adults (e.g., Bos et al., 2020; Casey et al., 2011; Casey et al., 2005; Shulman et al., 2015; Shulman et al., 2016), the justice system typically treats anyone 18 or older under the broad auspice of the adult criminal justice system, resulting in a “developmental mismatch”

Based on the original pilot, it is anticipated that approximately 40-45% of referred young men will be considered eligible and suitable for the YAC. This project aims to enroll an additional 200 young men into the enhanced YAC study, resulting in a total of 300 young men participating in the full evaluation.

The YAC Study Gives the Community an Opportunity to...



The decision to limit the research study to males at this time is due to the fact that most individuals involved in the justice system are male. Thus, not enough eligible females will be referred to the program during the timeframe of the proposed project so that differential impact of the YAC intervention and Traditional Court on females can be evaluated. While it may be tempting to include females and not consider the sex of the participant while conducting the analyses, this approach does not address the unique needs (i.e., physical health, mental health, etc.) of young women involved in the justice system. As such, young women should not be an “add on” to a court designed for young men, but rather their own specific focus.

RCT Study Methodology

Evaluators with well-established subject matter expertise in adolescent and young adult development, mental health and the justice system will conduct the RCT, beginning with reviewing informed consent for the research study. **Importantly, consenting to participate in the RCT research study will be separate from consenting to participate in the YAC. Young men may choose to participate in the YAC without having to participate in the research study.**

In accordance with standard research protocol, research procedures will be approved by UCI’s IRB prior to implementation. Study procedures will be clearly described during the consent process and all participants will be compensated for their time. All data collected will also be protected from subpoena by a Certificate of Confidentiality issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (In accordance with the provisions of section 301(d) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 241(d)).

All eligible, suitable young men who consent to participate in the RCT study with the enhanced YAC interventions, will go through the same referral, screening randomization, consent and court assignment processes described above in the *Background* section. The interviews will also be conducted in the same way using the same measures, only they will now be interviewed on nine occasions due to the extended follow up period:



Data Sources

As described above in the *Background* section, participant interviews will be conducted one-on-one with research staff and assess a variety of behavioral, psychological, attitudinal, mental health, physical health, substance use, health care utilization, and socio-economic outcomes. For those assigned to the YAC intervention, participants will also complete brief interviews to assess their subjective experience of the Court (e.g., whether they felt that their voice was heard, whether their case was processed fairly, whether they were treated with respect), whether they faced any barriers to attending court, and whether they currently have a safe/stable place to live.

Administrative data and official records will also be obtained from the service providers, OC Courts, OC jails and the OC Probation Department to measure factors such as referrals to/engagement in services, arrests/convictions for new crimes, etc.

Because the team will be following the young men for a total of four years, the researchers will have data while the young men are involved with the court (i.e., approximately 1.5 years) and while they reintegrate back into their communities felony-free (i.e., approximately 2.5 years after they graduate). This project is specifically designed to determine whether these supportive services help the young men change their outlook on life, situation and whatever else led to their contact with the justice system. The longitudinal data will allow the team to understand the extent to which any positive outcomes of the YAC, such as improvements in health and well-being and reduced recidivism, are sustained long-term. With more data, time and resources, the research team will be able to produce evidence-based guidelines for best practices that can be used to help young men in our community and elsewhere.

Learning Goals

This project will produce empirical evidence to determine the extent to which the YAC, compared to traditional court proceedings, reduces recidivism, prevents the onset of serious mental illness and/or promotes other positive outcomes such as improved educational and employment attainment, which is critical as other jurisdictions consider initiating their own YACs. This enhanced design will also help determine whether positive outcomes, if any, are sustained long-term.

If the YAC intervention is associated with improved outcomes compared to Traditional Court, this project will also attempt to address the following questions, pending availability of sufficient data:

- WHY does YAC work? (i.e., are some YAC interventions or Court features more strongly linked to improved outcomes compared to Traditional Court, etc.)
- For WHOM does YAC work? (i.e., does YAC and/or certain YAC features improve outcomes for some groups of young men but not others, etc.) and
- Are racial, ethnic and socio-economic DISPARITIES REDUCED among YAC Intervention participants compared to Traditional Court participants (i.e., Do young men of color who participate in the YAC have better short-term and long-term outcomes than young men of color in the control condition? Within the program, does participation in YAC have a greater positive impact on young men of color than White men?)

If the RCT study does not observe improved outcomes compared to Traditional Court, exploratory analyses will be conducted to try and better understand the following for the overall sample of youth, pending availability of sufficient data:

- Which overall justice system interventions, community-based services and/or programs support positive, long-term behavioral and health-related outcomes (regardless of participation in the YAC)?
- What are the risk and protective factors for serious mental health and substance use problems among this population?
- What are the long-term outcomes associated with various mental health-related conditions experienced by the young men in this study?
- In what ways does living with mental health and substance use conditions influence justice-system-involved young adults' day-to-day life, and their ability to desist from criminal activity, engage in pro-social, positive socio-economic activities (e.g., work; schooling), and achieve social milestones (e.g., parenthood, partnership)?
- More broadly, how can the data be used to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of a unique, moderately high-risk, justice-system-involved sample?

RESEARCH ON INN COMPONENT

While the Orange County YAC itself was designed to be similar to other YACs around the country (especially the San Francisco YAC), the proposed project is the first RCT empirical evaluation of a YAC. Before it is possible to initiate additional YACs in other jurisdictions around the county, it is critical to first empirically test whether this type of program effectively reduces recidivism and promotes other positive outcomes with the gold standard in social science research – a randomized controlled trial.

In addition, the proposed YAC is similar to other collaborative courts in Orange County, including those that are supported by justice-involved Full Service Partnership (FSP) programs (i.e., Mental Health Diversion Court, DUI Court, Homeless Outreach Court, Opportunity Court, Recovery Court, or Whatever it Takes Court in Orange County (<https://www.occourts.org/directory/collaborative-courts/>)). However a key difference is that these collaborative courts are intended for adults living with serious mental health conditions, and the OC YAC is designed to support those who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions or who are at risk of developing mental health conditions and may otherwise get lost in the system when attorneys consider who might be eligible to be referred to one of the existing collaborative courts. Yet intervening early and effectively in supporting a young person's mental health has the power to change the trajectory of their overall life, especially for those who have the added risk factor of justice involvement. In the long run, effective early intervention among this at-risk group of young men may also have downstream impacts on the overall justice, mental health and social service systems.

CONTRACTING

Orange County plans to contract out this project as a sole source contract with the University of California Regents, University of California at Irvine (UCI), as UCI research staff developed and implemented the original pilot study, off of which this project is based. OC Health Care Agency staff will monitor the contract for quality and compliance.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM PLANNING

This project aligns with one of the County's strategic priorities identified in partnership with local community stakeholders during the development of the [MHSA Three-Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-2020 through 2022-23](#):

- Increasing Access for Behavioral Health Services, with youth and people of color identified as a priority population (page 19)

Staff from the OC Health Care Agency also facilitated two community planning meetings for this (and one other) Innovation project proposal in February 2022. Using the OC MHSA email distribution lists built over the years, invitations to the meetings were sent to consumers, family members, mental health providers, healthcare providers, the faith-based community, transitional age youth, the OC Behavioral Health Advisory Board, former Orange County MHSA Steering Committee members, law enforcement, justice agencies and other stakeholder groups. During to COVID-19, all meetings were virtual. A synopsis of each meeting is provided below:

February 3, 2022 from 4-6pm over Zoom (over 70 attendees)

- The UCI Faculty/Principal Investigator of the existing YAC RCT Study Pilot described the YAC and existing pilot study, preliminary lessons learned, and proposed new project elements

- The presenters answered attendees' clarifying questions, such as:
 - How many additional young men would be served (*n=200 enrolled and then randomly assigned to the YAC or traditional court*)
 - Whether the young men currently enrolled in the pilot would be able to participate in this current project (*yes*)
 - A general description of the justice agency partnerships
 - Whether this project meets INN criteria (*based on HCA staff understanding of INN regulations and the nature of the current proposal, yes*)
- Attendees expressed strong support to move forward with this project and agreed to review and discuss the proposed budget at the next meeting

February 8, 2022 from 4-6pm over Zoom (over 50 attendees)

- HCA staff reviewed the draft budget and answered attendee questions on staff roles/positions.
- Many stakeholders offered comments in support of the project proposal and in favor of the above recommendation to post with a 5-year total project budget not to exceed \$12 million. There was one additional comment that any increase in funding request above this amount should be brought back to community planning for consideration. No objections to proceeding with the proposed project and budget were noted.

MHSA GENERAL STANDARDS

Community Collaboration:

The YAC study is a multi-agency collaboration between the Court, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Probation Department, community service providers, UC Irvine, and the YAC clients themselves. The project also plans to engage with interested and active community members through periodic stakeholder meetings.

Cultural Competency:

A significant aim of this project is to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in access to mental health services, and to improve the long-term outcomes for a vulnerable population of justice-system-involved young adults (which predominately consists of young men of color). The service providers with whom the YAC collaborate have extensive experience working with young men of color and have received cultural competency trainings throughout their education. In addition, culture and familial norms are considered when developing treatment plans and assessing risks, needs, and strengths. The study team and service providers also make a concerted effort to recruit team members who are fluent in Spanish, given that many of the men in the study (and their families) are native Spanish speakers.

The project will hire new staff members and therapists who have a profound understanding of the lived experiences of the young men in the YAC. The project also hopes to expand the breadth of culturally-relevant services and programs available to the young men in the YAC. Staff will also complete ongoing trainings regarding evidence-based, culturally competent approaches to trauma-informed care. Finally, interviews will be translated into non-English languages, taking care to ensure that translations are mindful of linguistic nuance in order to be non-stigmatizing, recovery-oriented and inclusive.

Client-Driven:

The YAC is client-driven such that the entire program is tailored to the needs of each client and includes ongoing involvement of the client and their support systems. The YAC team works with clients to holistically understand each young man's unique circumstance, set of risk factors, strengths, and goals. All of these

features are taken into consideration when treatment plans are designed and implemented, particularly given the strengths of this transitional age group. In addition, each young man randomly selected into the YAC must take responsibility for their future by being engaged with the court and by following through with the mutually agreed upon treatment plan. By working hard and meeting the expectations of the court, each YAC participant will have an opportunity to progress through the program (and receive public recognition and rewards), and to graduate and have their felony removed or reduced. Clients are consistently told that the YAC implements a team approach to address their needs, thereby adopting a client-centered framework to case management. Finally, it is important to emphasize that each young man is measured relative to himself. Success in the YAC is not measured by a single set of goals and achievements. Specific goals and expectations for each young man accepted into the YAC are set on an individual basis – with each person’s unique situation, background, and qualities taken into consideration.

Family-Driven:

While all clients of the YAC are legally adults, the YAC team understands that many of the young men in the court have important familial obligations, such as providing care for a child or an aging or ill family member and tries to support and accommodate these obligations to the greatest extent possible. Furthermore, families of YAC clients can be a profound source of material and emotional support. Thus, the program strives to include the ongoing involvement of family members in the implementation and sustainability of program components, such as being involved in therapy or recovery groups. Furthermore, the service providers work hard to facilitate healthy relationships between the young men and their family members, which can include referrals for family-based therapy and/or parenting classes when necessary.

Wellness, Recovery and Resilience-Focused:

This project promotes wellness, recovery and resilience through early identification and intervention services and holistic, supportive care for the young men in the YAC. This includes a variety of treatment and services designed to support wellness (e.g., basic hygiene; food; social integration and support), recovery (e.g., referrals for treatment), and resilience-based self-sufficiency (e.g., housing; transportation; academic and employment support), which are regarded as especially critical since this population is starkly underserved and disenfranchised in the community due to their criminal record.

Using scaffolding techniques, even youth at risk for severe substance use and trauma-related mental health problems will be able to make gains in their recovery through the YAC team approach and by using recommendations from developmental science regarding evidenced-based, trauma-informed care for this age group (e.g., rewards work better to shape behaviors than do punishments).

Integrated Service Experience for Clients and Families:

The premise of the YAC Intervention and team approach is to provide an integrated service experience for the young men randomly selected into the court and their families and reduce the potential for them to “fall through the cracks” and miss the opportunity to receive needed care.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN EVALUATION

As stated previously, the YAC study is currently a multi-agency collaboration between the Court, District Attorney’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, Probation Department, community service providers, UC Irvine, and the YAC clients themselves. The project also plans to engage with interested and active community members by hosting stakeholder meetings and providing access to progress reports and study results.

In addition, the YAC team, which comprises representatives from all stakeholders, convenes biweekly to discuss clients of the court, court procedures and protocols, and the unique challenges and successes presented by clients (both legally and personally). Accordingly, these meetings represent an organic platform for stakeholders to provide feedback regarding the project. Additionally, larger procedural issues (e.g., eligibility criteria, termination thresholds) are discussed annually as needed with YAC team members and court decision makers.

The YAC program is also unique because it involves feedback from the young men involved with the court in a neutral way. The interviews with the YAC participants give the young men a voice and platform to share their stories, experiences, and opinions.

INNOVATION PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

Should the study results identify early intervention mental health services as an important contributing factor to improving the overall wellbeing and daily functioning and/or reducing recidivism, this element could potentially be sustained through CalAIM, as appropriate, as well as MHSa Prevention and Early Intervention funding pending support through a local community planning process.

The empirical data produced in the project will allow the County to make informed, evidenced-based decisions about whether to continue with the YAC, and how it should be expanded. Further, because the proposed study will potentially allow the research team to explicate which elements of the program yielded positive outcomes (e.g., improvements in young adult mental health and well-being; reduced recidivism), the County can make data-driven decisions on how to efficiently allocate funds.

What Will the YAC RCT Study Give the Community?



If the YAC is effective, the proposed study will be able to make specific policy recommendations that could reduce health, educational, occupational, and housing inequalities for individuals who have contact with the criminal justice system during early young adulthood. The team also hopes to be able to identify which YAC services were related to the best long-term outcomes, which could help jurisdictions channel limited funds into the resources that are most effective.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

Information about the study and its findings will be shared via:

- Presentations at conferences around the United States (possibly abroad)
- Community and stakeholder meetings
- Regular progress reports
- Peer-reviewed published manuscripts
- YAC study website with key information about study rationale, design, and primary findings
- Ongoing support for YAC teams in other jurisdictions

TIMELINE

Expected Start Date: July 1, 2022

Expected End Date: June 30, 2027

Estimated Project Timeline: See following page for timeline.

C1 = Cohort 1 (Pilot study cohort; Innovation funding will be used to extend data collection up to 4 years)

C2 = Cohort 2 (New cohort that will be completely supported with Innovation funding)

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<u>Year 1: FY 2022-23</u>				
Activities/ Milestones	50 BL Interviews(C2) 37 F1 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) Hiring/Training of Integrated Mental Health Team	50 BL Interview (C2) 37 F1 Interviews(C2) 16 F2 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1) Hiring/Training of Integrated Mental Health Team	50 BL Interview (C2) 38 F1 Interviews(C2) 17 F2 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1) 12 F9 Interviews(C1) Hiring/Training of Integrated Mental Health Team	50 BL Interview (C2) 38 F1 Interviews(C2) 17 F2 Interviews(C2) 7 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1) 13 F9 Interviews(C1)
Deliverables		1. Mini Data Status Summary 1	1. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Progress Report 1
<u>Year 2: FY 2023-24</u>				
Activities/ Milestones	35 F1 Interviews(C2) 65 F2 Interviews(C2) 50 F3 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1)	15 F1 Interviews(C2) 65 F2 Interviews(C2) 50 F3 Interviews(C2) 20 F4 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1)	20 F2 Interviews(C2) 50 F3 Interviews(C2) 40 F4 Interviews(C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1) 12 F9 Interviews(C1)	50 F3 Interviews(C2) 40 F4 Interviews(C2) 7 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews(C1) 13 F9 Interviews(C1) Hiring/Training of Additional Therapist to Support YAC Growth
Deliverables	1. Presentations to YAC Team	1. Mini Data Status Summary 2 2. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Academic Conference Presentations	2. Progress Report 2

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<u>Year 3: FY 2024-25</u>				
Activities/ Milestones	40 F4 Interviews (C2) 50 F5 Interviews (C2) 25 F6 Interviews (C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) Hiring/Training of Additional Therapist to Support YAC Growth	40 F4 Interviews (C2) 50 F5 Interviews (C2) 25 F6 Interviews (C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews (C1) 12 F9 Interviews (C1)	20 F4 Interviews (C2) 50 F5 Interviews (C2) 25 F6 Interviews (C2) 6 F7 Interviews (C1) 11 F8 Interviews (C1)	50 F5 Interviews (C2) 25 F6 Interviews (C2) 7 F7 Interviews (C1) 12 F8 Interviews (C1) 13 F9 Interviews (C1)
Deliverables	1. Presentations to YAC Team	1. Mini Data Status Summary 3 2. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Progress Report 3
<u>Year 4: FY 2025-26</u>				
Activities/ Milestones	25 F6 Interviews (C2) 50 F7 Interviews (C2) 25 F8 Interviews (C2)	25 F6 Interviews (C2) 50 F7 Interviews (C2) 25 F8 Interviews (C2) 12 F9 Interviews (C1)	25 F6 Interviews (C2) 50 F7 Interviews (C2) 25 F8 Interviews (C2)	25 F6 Interviews (C2) 50 F7 Interviews (C2) 25 F8 Interviews (C2) 13 F9 Interviews (C1)
Deliverables	1. Presentations to YAC Team	1. Mini Data Status Summary 4 2. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Progress Report 4
<u>Year 5: FY 2026-27</u>				
Activities/ Milestones	50 F8 Interviews (C2) 50 F9 Interviews (C2)	50 F8 Interviews (C2) 50 F9 Interviews (C2)	50 F9 Interviews (C2)	50 F9 Interviews (C2)
Deliverables		1. Mini Data Status Summary 5 2. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Academic Conference Presentations	1. Final Report 2. Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts 3. Study Website w/ Methodology, List of Publications, and Main Findings

BUDGET NARRATIVE

If approved, Orange County will use available Innovation funding from FY 2019-20 and onward, as well as any unspent funds from previously approved Innovation projects.

The total estimated direct costs for the Mental Health Services Component is \$5,199,078. Within this budget, an estimated 66% is dedicated to the salaries and benefits of Mental Health Services Personnel, an estimated 24% is dedicated to services provided to study participants (Education/Enrichment, Supplies & Equipment, Stabilization), and the remaining 11% is dedicated to costs related to the Mental Health Office Space. Please see table below for additional details.

The total estimated direct costs for the YAC Research Study is \$3,657,912. Within this budget, an estimated 91% is dedicated to the salaries and benefits of Research Study Personnel, an estimated 2.5% is for Research Personnel supplies, and an estimated 6.5% is for participant stipends and incentives. Research represents 31% of total project costs. Please see table below for additional details.

YAC MENTAL HEALTH AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES			
Category of Expense	Est. Annual Cost*	Est. 5-Year Cost	Notes
Clinical Staffing	\$755,546	\$3,420,864	Principal Investigator, Clinical Director, Multiple Clinicians and Clinical Trainees Includes salaries and benefits (N=8)
Clinic Office Space & Operational Costs	\$110,026	\$547,214	Includes start up, supplies, on-going lease, insurance and other operating expenses including parking validation if space has paid parking (to reimburse participants for parking)
Flexible Funding For Participants	\$245,600	\$1,231,000	N=300 estimated participants; Housing support, education, childcare, transportation, etc.
DIRECT CLINICAL	\$1,111,172	\$5,199,078	
YAC Research Study			
Research Staffing	\$689,292	\$3,329,006	Principal Investigator, Research Manager, Administrative Manager, multiple Research Staff; Includes salaries and benefits (N=7)
Research Staff Training, Supplies, Study Travel, etc.	\$17,631	\$94,719	Includes training, computers, interview tablets, travel reimbursement for participant interviews, etc.
Stipends for Participants	\$53,710	\$234,188	N=300 incentives/stipends, etc.
DIRECT RESEARCH	\$760,633	\$3,657,912	
UCI INDIRECT	\$261,437	\$1,243,366	15% rate
HCA ADMIN/INDIRECT	\$383,984	\$1,818,064	18% rate
PROJECT TOTAL	\$2,517,225	\$11,918,420	

* Year 3 as example, other years vary