

# The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™):

Service Score Results: Baseline

SPEP™ ID and Time: 0317-T01

Agency Name: Abraxas Youth and Family Services  
Program Name: Abraxas Academy  
Service Name: Psycho-Educational Groups – Guns, Gangs, & Taneka’s Tales  
Cohort Total: 19  
Timeframe of Selected Cohort: March 1, 2020 - February 28, 2021  
Referral County(s): Bedford (2); Berks (2); Bradford (2); Bucks (1); Delaware (3); Erie (4);  
Lackawanna (1); Lehigh (1); Luzerne (2); Westmoreland (1)  
Date(s) of Interview(s): Dec 3, 2020, July 20, 2021, & August 17, 2021  
Lead County: Lancaster  
Probation Representative(s): Chandelle Catrone, Supervisor, Lancaster County Juvenile Probation  
EPIS Representative: Dawn Karoscik

## Description of Service:

Abraxas Academy provides intensive treatment to adolescents and their families who are experiencing severe emotional, behavioral, psychological, educational and social problems. Clients must be court adjudicated males between the age of 14-18. Youth must be in 9th grade, level of violence as a factor, dramatically high risk for suicidal behavior, especially recent attempts. Psychotic features will also be reviewed. IQ of 70 or higher. The Abraxas Academy has two secure residential programs, the Habitual Offenders Program and the Sexual Offenders Program.

The Habitual Offenders Program uses a comprehensive approach in providing treatment services to the residents. This is achieved through trauma informed cognitive behavioral therapy with a strong emphasis on functional behavior assessment and behavioral modification. The program milieu and curriculum utilize the principles of BARJ, an anger and emotional curriculum intertwined, Applied Behavioral Analysis and a cognitive distortions component. Treatment emphasis is placed on identifying and correcting potentially harmful patterns of thought, improving social skills, teaching problem solving skills and developing an awareness of the community and victim, while altering target pro-social and maladaptive behaviors.

There are 3 treatment tracks that are provided for youth; 3-months, 6-months, 10-months. The track is a collaborative decision made by Abraxas Academy, referring Juvenile Probation Department, and the Courts. Youth are afforded all treatment modalities but depending on the track, delivery and dosage amounts of the service will vary.

Psycho-Educational Groups - Guns, Gangs, & Taneka’s Tales:

The Psycho-Educational group is focused on providing education to residents through information sharing by storytelling. Discussion ideas and activities are used to engage the participants. This group is delivered to all residents by a Clinician or Youth Development Specialist. The following curriculums used for this group and are delivered on a rotation.

Gangs - “Gangs – 50 + Stories of Fractured Lives” is a curriculum from the Arise Foundation. The youth read personal stories of gang members and the impact gangs have had on their life. The curriculum helps youth examine emotions and ties in discussion questions based on this.

Guns – “Gun Violence Prevention Workbook” is a curriculum from the Commonwealth of PA Department of Human Services Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services. Each group session covers a chapter that incorporates news articles for discussion points on the negative impact and ripple effects of guns. Residents discuss their experiences in terms of the impact on the damage they have caused by their victimization.

Taneka’s Tales – “Taneka’s Tales – 30 Stories of Urban Life” is a curriculum from the Arise Foundation. The residents read personal letters that have a broader focus on gangs, STI’s, bullying, teenage pregnancy, divorce, AIDs, street life, etc.

### The four characteristics of a service found to be the most strongly related to reducing recidivism:

1. **SPEP™ Service Type:** Group Counseling

**Based on the meta-analysis, is there a qualifying supplemental service?** No

**If so, what is the Service Type?** There is no qualifying supplemental service

**Was the supplemental service provided?** N/A **Total Points Possible for this Service Type:** 30

**Total Points Received:** 30 **Total Points Possible:** 35

2. **Quality of Service:** Research has shown that programs that deliver service with high quality are more likely to have a positive impact on recidivism reduction. Monitoring of quality is defined by existence of written protocol, staff training, staff supervision, and how drift from service delivery is addressed.

**Total Points Received:** 10 **Total Points Possible:** 20

**3. Amount of Service:** Score was derived by calculating the total number of weeks and hours received by each youth in the service. The amount of service is measured by the target amounts of service for the SPEP™ service categorization. Each SPEP™ service type has varying amounts of duration and contact hours. Youth should receive the targeted amounts to have the greatest impact on recidivism reduction.

Points received for Duration or Number of Weeks: 0  
Points received for Contact Hours or Number of Hours: 0

Total Points Received: 0 Total Points Possible: 20

**4. Youth Risk Level:** The risk level score is compiled by calculating the total % of youth that score above low risk, and the total % of youth who score above moderate risk to reoffend based on the results of the YLS.

19 youth in the cohort are Moderate, High, Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of 12 points  
6 in the cohort are High or Very High YLS Risk Level for a total of 10 points

Total Points Received: 22 Total Points Possible: 25

**Basic SPEP™ Score:** 62 total points received out of 100 points. Compares service to any other type of SPEP™ therapeutic service. (e.g. individual counseling compared to cognitive behavioral therapy, social skills training, mentoring, etc.)

**Note:** Services with scores greater than or equal to 50 show the service is having a positive impact on recidivism reduction.

**Program Optimization Percentage:** 65% This percentage compares the service to the same service types found in the research. (e.g. individual counseling compared to all other individual counseling services included in the research.)

### **The SPEP™ and Performance Improvement**

The intended use of the SPEP™ is to optimize the effectiveness of reducing recidivism among juvenile offenders. Recommendations for performance improvement are included in the service Feedback Report, and these recommendations are the focus of the Performance Improvement Plan, a shared responsibility of the service provider and the juvenile probation department.

The service could improve its capacity for recidivism reduction by addressing the following recommendations:

1. Regarding Quality of Service Delivery:
  - a. Written Protocol:
    - i. Identify in writing which youth are most appropriate for this service as it relates to YLS criminogenic needs and responsivity factors
    - ii. Contact the developer of the curriculums to ensure that the latest version is being utilized. If any revisions are made to the manual as a result of updates by the developer, ensure that the date revised is added
  - b. Staff Training:
    - i. Develop a training specific to this service and document when staff receive
    - ii. Create a booster training relevant to the service and deliver at predetermined time frames and document when completed
    - iii. Document that the supervisor has been trained to deliver this service
  - c. Staff Supervision:
    - i. Ensure written feedback is consistently provided to staff
    - ii. Provide specific mention of this service in the employee annual review
  - d. Organizational Response to Drift:
    - i. Develop a procedure to capture data that is specific to the fidelity and quality of service delivery
      1. Consider creating pre/post tests
    - ii. Develop a procedure to review the qualitative data gathered and utilize to improve and enhance the service
2. Regarding Amount of Service:
  - a. Explore ways to increase dosage and duration for this group.
  - b. Explore ways to capture additional time spent outside of group for this service.