



# SAN MATEO COUNTY **PROBATION DEPARTMENT**

MIND BODY AWARENESS PROJECT  
ANNUAL EVALUATION

**2022-2023**



## **ABOUT THE RESEARCHER**

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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# Program Description

Mind Body Awareness (MBA) staff offer once-a-week 90-minute classes at the Youth Services Center - Juvenile Hall (YSC-JH). The MBA program covers a 10-module curriculum that emphasizes mindfulness, basic goodness, impulse regulation, emotional intelligence, self-compassion, trauma and core beliefs, forgiveness, empathy, belonging, and rites of passage. The program is delivered in ten-week cycles, and the topics are driven by the needs of the group and the curriculum. One or two highly skilled instructors and interns teach MBA classes provided with weekly clinical supervision. Youths are assigned approximately 30 minutes per week to complete individual work outside of class to bolster their mindfulness education through meditation, self-awareness activities, and practicing mindfulness exercises.

# Programmatic Challenges

When long term youth have been participating in MBA programming at Hillcrest Juvenile Hall for an extended period and lack novelty, several dynamics within the group setting can undergo significant changes. Firstly, a sense of stagnation may arise among the participants. The lack of novelty in curriculum can lead to a routine, repetitive atmosphere that hinders the youths' willingness to explore new perspectives and engage in self-reflection, limiting the potential for personal growth and change.

Secondly, long-term participants may develop resistance or complacency towards therapy. As they become familiar with the therapeutic process, some youths may resist engaging in discussions or activities that they perceive as redundant or unchallenging. The lack of novelty can contribute to a feeling of "been there, done that," which can undermine the therapeutic efficacy. This resistance can lead to a breakdown in communication and hinder the therapist's ability to address underlying issues effectively.

Furthermore, when novelty is lacking, peer interactions within the group may be affected. Novel experiences can spark curiosity and encourage youths to share their thoughts and feelings openly with each other. However, in a context where the therapeutic content remains unchanged, conversations within the group may become repetitive and superficial. This reduced peer interaction can diminish the benefits of shared experiences and mutual support that group therapy aims to provide.

To address the dynamics that arise from a lack of novelty in long-term programming, MBA is considering implementing various strategies. Introducing new therapeutic modalities, activities, topics can help reinvigorate the youths' interest and engagement, in addition to offering individual sessions. Additionally, involving the youths in the design and planning of certain aspects of their therapy can give them a sense of ownership and agency in their treatment process. Creating a dynamic and adaptable therapeutic environment can foster a continuous sense of growth and exploration, enabling the youths to confront new challenges and develop essential life skills effectively.

# Evaluation Methods

MBA programs are funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation’s (Probation) Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG). MBA reports client, service, and outcome data to Probation and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data from funded programs include:

- **Participants and Services:** Funded programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.
- **Outcomes:** MBA also collected three program-specific outcome measures to track progress toward the goal of improving each youth’s outcomes:
  - Percentage of youths who report improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction;
  - Percentage of staff who report improved general behavior in the hall; and
  - Percentage of youths who report greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy.
- **Evidence-Based Practices:** YOBG-funded programs are encouraged to follow evidence-based practices. To augment Probation’s knowledge of which programs are implemented by funded partners, each funded program provided a catalog of its practices. After receiving this information, ASR runs the cataloged practices reported through several clearinghouses<sup>1</sup> to determine whether the practices were an:
  - Evidence-based theory or premise;
  - Evidence-based model, shown by multiple experimental or quasi-experimental studies to be effective;
  - Evidence-based practice or modality shown to promote positive outcomes; and
  - Evidence-based tool or instrument that has been validated (concurrent and predictive).

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<sup>1</sup> For the full list of evidence-based practice clearinghouses used to evaluate programs, please see the YOBG and JJRBG Comprehensive Report for FY 2022-23.

# Evaluation Findings

## FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS

- MBA served 24 youths this fiscal year, with an average of 2.8 months in the program and 15.7 hours of services per youth.
- MBA met its targets for this fiscal year for all three performance measures.

## PROFILE OF YOUTHS SERVED

During FY 2022-23, MBA served 24 youths, who spent 2.8 months in the program and had 15.7 hours of service on average (Exhibit 1), serving more youths than in the prior fiscal year. Over two-thirds (70%) of youths served identified as Hispanic/Latino, 13% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% identified as Black/African American or White/Caucasian, and 9% identified as another race. Ninety-two percent (92%) of youths self-identified as male and 4% identified as female or transgender/another gender identity, and the average age of youths was 17.0 years old.

**Exhibit 1. Youth Services**

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23
Youths Served	11	18	24
Average Hours Served	17.7	14.3	15.7
Average Time in Program (Months)	3.8	3.8	2.8

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

MBA met or exceeded all of its target performance measures for FY 2022-23 (Exhibit 2). One hundred percent (100%) of youths reported improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction. In addition, 80% of youths reported greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy, and 80% of staff reported improved general behavior in the YSC-JH. This is the first year the program met all their goals.

**Exhibit 2. Program-Specific Outcomes**

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23 TARGET	FY 22-23 RESULTS
Percent of youths who reported improved emotional regulation, self-control, and stress reduction	90%	100%	80%	100%
Percent of staff who report improved general behavior in the hall	60%	75%	80%	80%
Percent of youths who report greater self-esteem, self-compassion, and empathy	85%	100%	80%	80%

## EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

In FY 2022-23, YOBG-funded programs were asked to provide the models, curricula, or practices employed in their programs. ASR then evaluated the given information to determine whether they were evidence-based or promising practices by running the items through evidence-based practice clearinghouses including SAMHSA Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide. Exhibit 3 details the practices and curricula that MBA used in its programs.

**Exhibit 3. Evidence-Based Practices**

PRACTICE	IMPLEMENTATION	RATING
Communication Skills	Learn the use of non-violent communication and mindful communication.	Although not recognized as an evidence-based or promising practice on its own, many promising programs for anger reduction feature increasing communication skills. <sup>2</sup>
Emotional Intelligence	Learn how to be aware of and engage difficult emotions like anger and grief.	Although not recognized as an evidence-based or promising practice on its own, many promising programs for adolescents feature increasing emotional intelligence. <sup>3</sup>
Empathy-Building Exercises	Build a sense of community and belonging with participants and compassion for self and others.	Emerging practice not yet rated for evidence-base.
Mindfulness-Based Interventions	Learn basic stress reduction techniques through meditation and help address impulsivity and self-awareness.	Evidence-based model according to empirical evidence. <sup>4</sup>
Trauma-Informed Practice	Therapists are trained in understanding the impact of complex trauma on youths and effective ways to address this as an integral part of the therapy. MBA programming holds a trauma-informed approach.	The Trauma-Informed approach is evidence-based practice according to SAMHSA. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Reilly, P.M., & Shopshire, M.S. (2019). Anger Management for Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Clients: A Cognitive–Behavioral Therapy Manual. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP19-02-01-001. [https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/anger\\_management\\_manual\\_508\\_compliant.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/anger_management_manual_508_compliant.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. (2019, November). Keepin' it REAL (KiR). [https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keepin-it-real-kir/#:~:text=keepin'%20it%20REAL%20\(kiR\)%20Middle%20School%20Program%20is%20a,such%20as%20drug%20refusal%20efficacy](https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keepin-it-real-kir/#:~:text=keepin'%20it%20REAL%20(kiR)%20Middle%20School%20Program%20is%20a,such%20as%20drug%20refusal%20efficacy)

<sup>4</sup> Hofmann, S. G., & Gómez, A. F. (2017). Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Anxiety and Depression. *The Psychiatric clinics of North America*, 40(4), 739–749. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2017.08.008>

<sup>5</sup> SAMHSA. (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, p10. Pub ID#: SMA14-4884. <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>



## CLIENT STORY

Each year, staff at YOBG funded programs provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following is the client story provided by MBA for FY 2022-23.

### Exhibit 4. Client Success Story

Name of client	Johnny (pseudonym)
Age and gender	18 years old, male
Reason for referral	Johnny first attended MBA classes at YSC in the prior fiscal year. He self-initiated attendance in the class to work on his self-awareness. He consistently attended group and individual sessions ending at the end of FY 2022-23.
Client’s behavior, affect, and appearance when they first started in the program	Initially, Johnny was respectful and kept to himself. He briefly answered questions that were posed to him but rarely initiated in the group. Most of his answers consisted of “I don’t know,” indicating self-doubt.
Activity engagement and consistency	During class, Johnny has volunteered to assist facilitators in setting up, cleaning up, and serving as a lead in group activities. He consistently initiated and shared his personal experiences in group discussions. Towards the end of the year, it became more noticeable that his presence in the group directly and indirectly enhanced participation and engagement of other youths in the class.
Client’s behavior, affect, and appearance toward the end of the program	Now, Johnny serves as a lead youth facilitator in the group. He exhibits leadership qualities, self-awareness and compassion that is reported as inspiring by the group. Johnny’s positive attitude and approachable manner makes it easy for new youth to join MBA classes.
What the client learned as a result of the program	<p>“I am more self-aware of my anger because of MBA class - When anger shows up in my body, I can stop and make a choice of what my next actions can be. This will help with my relationships when I get out.” - Johnny</p> <p>Johnny is able to participate in extended meditation sitting practice during class now. He uses the weekly sitting practice to assist in developing compassion for others and self. Johnny’s work on self-expansion both formally and informally is noticeable in group and individual sessions.</p>
What the client is doing differently in their life now as a result of the program	Johnny reported improved emotional awareness, self-control, and compassion towards others. The program staff report that Johnny is able to self-regulate in instances where he would previously lose his temper. During class, Johnny exhibits confidence in expressions and leadership that replaces the self-doubt he displayed before.
The value of the program in the client’s words	“I will continue practicing mindfulness when I get out. I am excited to teach my siblings and family because they need it too. When I am more aware of my sensations, emotions, and thoughts, I can have control of my actions. I didn’t have these tools before. No one taught me this. I feel more confident with this knowledge when I get out.” - Johnny