Exploring Probation Completion Among Justice-Involved Youth in a Community-Based

Intervention Program

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

in

School and Clinical Child Psychology

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Abstract

Structurally marginalized justice-involved youth on probation (JIYP) subject to community service hours are a particularly underserved population. This is due to numerous barriers to experiencing success, including risk factors related to reoffending, structural barriers such as finances and transportation, and reduced access to educational achievement. Considering the numerous factors that contribute to successful completion of probation, it is imperative to utilize creative and potentially unconventional intervention strategies to help guide these youths toward healthier outcomes. One such community-based intervention strategy, employed by Edmonton's Inner City High School (ICHS), supports JIYP by working alongside municipal police to allow registered students to complete their probationary hours through prosocial activities offered through their after-school Outreach program. The current study sought to understand: (1) the proportion of JIYP who completed their probation hours through ICHS's after-school Outreach program; (2) characteristics of the JIYP who did and did not complete their probation hours; and (3) documented participant engagement in available supports offered. Analysis involved descriptive exploration of program-collected data. Results revealed that 10 participants (30.3%) completed their probation hours. Additionally, review of participant characteristics showed that completers were generally older, more likely to be self-identified female, and more likely to have earned higher total credits compared to non-completers. Completers also typically had fewer charges/crimes committed and completed less Outreach hours. Participant engagement in two overarching program types, structural and legal supports, revealed that transportation, housing, mental health, addictions, and medical supports were among the most frequently accessed structural supports. Legal support utilized most often included assistance with contacting probation officers, court attendance, and contacting other criminal legal professionals.

Implications for the program and those akin to it, study limitations, and future research directions are included.

Keywords: justice-involved youth; juvenile probation; community-based intervention; wraparound programs

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Kathleen M. Holmstrom. The thesis research shown here acquired research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board 2, Project Name "Justice-Involved Youth Intervention Program", No. Pro00133481, August 11, 2023. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Pei. Jacquie has been steadfast with her kindness, patience, and endless support of me, and for that I am extremely grateful. I wholeheartedly know that she has been a massive source of inspiration for me to persist and work through all my hardships, whether academic or personal, and her guidance has been nothing but transformative. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Katherine Flannigan and Dr. Yuliya Kotelnikova for their willingness to be a part of my committee, as their support has also been integral to my studies. I would also like to thank the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta, as well as the School and Clinical Child Psychology program for investing in me as a student.

In addition, I would like to thank Inner City High School and all staff – particularly Joe Cloutier, Nikolai Linden, and Armand Silverquill – for allowing me to walk alongside you and providing me with such a unique opportunity to conduct this research.

Finally, I would like to personally thank my support systems that are near and dear to my heart: my cohort, my friends, my family, and especially my parents. Thank you all for believing in me, being there for me when I needed you, and for cheering me on when you knew I needed an extra push. None of this would have been possible without all of you.

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List of Abbreviations

ACEs – Adverse childhood experiences

ICHS – Inner City High School

JIYP – Justice-involved youth on probation

LS – Legal Support

YE – Youth Engagement

Introduction

Youth criminal legal system involvement in Canada remains a critical issue, with significant numbers of young individuals interacting with the criminal legal system each year. Approximately 10,960 youths were admitted to correctional services within Canada during the 2022-2023 fiscal year, highlighting the ongoing need for effective interventions and support (Statistics Canada, 2024a). These youths often face a variety of responses designed to support their rehabilitation and integration, including diversion programs, detention, incarceration, and community-based probation. These responses aim to rehabilitate and reintegrate justice-involved youth into society and enhance public safety.

Youth experiencing intersection with the criminal legal system may be subject to correctional surveillance, such as community-based probation with conditions proportional to the frequency and severity of their charges as a means of rehabilitation and reintegration (Pulis & Sprott, 2005). In Canada, approximately 33% of justice-involved youths initially entering correctional services were placed under probationary conditions in the 2022-2023 fiscal year (Statistics Canada, 2024a), with 42% of youth being subject to probationary conditions for the first time (Statistics Canada, 2024b). The effectiveness of probation interventions for these justice-involved youths varies substantially across different programs and regions. Although some programs demonstrate high rates of probation completion, others face challenges in ensuring compliance with probation conditions (Department of Justice Canada, 2021).

Nationally, the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP) in British Columbia reported that 46% of youth on probation received new charges, with 33% of these cases resulting in convictions (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). In Saskatchewan, 77% of youth who appeared in court had subsequent contact with police within two years, indicating the challenges

in preventing reoffending through probation alone (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). Similarly, in Nova Scotia, 82% of repeat youth offenders on probation accounted for a significant portion of police contacts during the study period, emphasizing the challenges faced by probation systems in managing high-risk youths experiencing intersection with the juvenile criminal legal system (Department of Justice Canada, 2021).

In Alberta, efforts to support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending are evident through various Department of Justice Canada-funded programs that focus on individualized case planning and multidisciplinary approaches. Despite the availability of data from other Canadian provinces, specific re-contact rates for justice-involved youth on probation (JIYP) in Alberta are currently unavailable (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). Although these programs positively contribute to youth rehabilitation in other Canadian provinces, the overall effectiveness of probation within Canada remains variable, with some youth successfully reintegrating into the community and others continuing to reoffend (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Reid & Cole, 2024). These differences in probation outcomes highlight the importance of addressing the underlying issues that contribute to noncompliance with probation conditions, which can lead to breaches of probation and hinder successful rehabilitation.

For justice-involved youth on probation (JIYP), frequent contributors to failing to meet conditions of probation often include misunderstanding conditions of probation due to the number and/or complexity of conditions (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020), and noncompliance with probationary conditions due to diminished access to important structural resources (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Noorman & Brancale, 2023), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and/or substance use (Folk et al., 2021; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; NeMoyer et al., 2020),

emotional and/or behavioural disorders (Folk et al., 2021; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019), and chronic absenteeism in educational settings (Daly et al., 2016; Mueller & Stoddard, 2006). Given the risks associated with failure to meet probationary conditions and the multitude of challenges faced by JIYP, there is a pressing need for effective interventions that promote successful probation completion.

Building a sense of community to enhance strength-based skills, resilience, and relationships may be the missing link in fostering long-term positive outcomes, especially for justice-involved youth who do not respond to probation alone (Crumé et al., 2021; Matthews & Hubbard, 2007; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Person-centered wraparound programs provide informal, structural needs-based, and cost-effective opportunities to build these integral social connections (Coldiron et al., 2019; Myers & Farrell, 2008). Such programs are designed to be flexible and adaptive to the individual needs of justice-involved youth, offering a more holistic approach that extends beyond mere compliance with probation conditions (Coldiron et al., 2019; Siennick et al., 2020).

Person-centered programs can be especially valuable within school-based settings (Coldiron et al., 2019; Klymkiw et al., 2024). Traditional probation, which mandates school attendance as a condition of probation sentences (*Youth Criminal Justice Act* [YCJA], 2002), falls short in addressing challenges that extend beyond educational engagement such as structural barriers, mental health, and addictions (Klymkiw et al., 2024; Pappas & Dent, 2021). Although increased educational engagement has the potential to enhance protective factors and positive outcomes (Crumé et al., 2021; Siennick et al., 2020), it is the relational aspect of support provided within educational contexts that may be of particular importance. The mandated aspect of education is vital as it aims to ensure that justice-involved youth are consistently engaged in

an educational setting providing structure and routine, which are important factors in reducing idle time that could otherwise lead to reoffending (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Daly et al., 2016). However, the relational support provided through person-centered programs is likely the element that enhances probationary engagement and compliance (Crumé et al., 2021; Zelechoski et al., 2024). By focusing on building strong, supportive relationships and addressing the unique needs of each youth, person-centered programs can significantly improve outcomes related to probation completion and support successful reintegration into society (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Edmonton's Inner City High School (ICHS) is a wraparound program that offers an after-school Outreach program. ICHS provides opportunities for JIYP to participate in after-school activities designed to increase prosocial behaviours and community engagement, which provides access to foundational supports necessary for the successful completion of probationary hours (i.e., often in the form of community service hours). These efforts collectively aim to achieve the ultimate outcome of successful probation completion. Outreach activities often vary, including but not limited to going to see a movie, walking through the river valley, having a barbeque, going ice-skating, picking up garbage inside and outside the school, and engaging in arts-based activities with finished products being placed around the school with the student's consent. ICHS serves structurally marginalized youth with a focus on "trust, respect, cooperation, and non-violence" (ICHS, 2021), taking a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach to help youth in dire situations such as legal involvement. As ICHS's population tends to be mobile, the programming they offer is flexible and adapts to youths' short- and long-term needs.

Although many structurally marginalized justice-involved youths attend ICHS's after-school Outreach program, there have been no studies to date that have descriptively explored

trends in variables or outcomes related to probation completion and engagement in this specific program. Relationally informed and culturally responsive interventions have shown promise sin fostering compliance and promoting positive outcomes among JIYP (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; McMickens et al., 2024; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Despite these associations, the specific mechanisms through which these factors influence probation completion remain underexplored, particularly within community-based and wraparound settings like ICHS. Understanding these mechanisms of change is vital for developing targeted interventions that can enhance probation success and support the long-term rehabilitative efforts of JIYP. As such, this study was a unique opportunity to descriptively explore key variables that might highlight differences between those who complete their probation hours and those who do not through ICHS's after-school Outreach program to inform future directions for research. Therefore, conducting an independent evaluation of ICHS's after-school Outreach program is an important first step to assess its programming for JIYP.

Literature Review

The forthcoming sections will discuss the characteristics and needs of justice-involved youth, mechanisms that may contribute to healthy outcomes for youth involved in the criminal legal system who are on probation, optimizing outcomes by aligning needs with a model for intervention initiatives, and types of programs that implement and intervention model with youth populations.

Youth in the Criminal Legal System

Characteristics and Needs

Justice-involved youth represent a particularly unique population by virtue of their age and intersection with the criminal legal system (Quinn, 2015). Unlike adults, youths are still in

critical stages of development, both psychologically and socially. The experiences and challenges they face during their formative years can significantly impact their trajectories into adulthood (Daly et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2020). This developmental context is essential for understanding why justice-involved youth need tailored interventions that go beyond punitive measures (McMickens et al., 2024; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2020; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Adolescence is a period marked by significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this time, youth are developing their identities, forming important social relationships, and gaining skills that will carry them into adulthood (Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2022). However, justice-involved youth often encounter destabilizing disruptions in these developmental processes. Many of these youths have histories of trauma, exposure to violence, substance use, and unsafe and unstable housing, all of which can hinder their developmental progress and increase the likelihood of engaging in offending behaviour, thereby necessitating intervention (Folk et al., 2021; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Kapoor et al., 2018; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Walker et al., 2022).

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are notably prevalent among justice-involved youth, with exposure to multiple ACEs linked to higher risk of mental health challenges, substance use, and criminal legal behaviours (Bergquist et al., 2024; Folk et al., 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; McKenna & Anderson, 2024). The prevalence rate of ACE exposure among justice-involved youth is significantly higher compared to the general adolescent population, with an average of three or more ACEs (Bergquist et al., 2024; Folk et al., 2021). The cumulative effect of multiple ACEs can result in a heightened state of trauma and stress, resulting in these youths lacking the coping mechanisms or strategies and support systems

needed to manage such stress effectively (Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Addressing these issues through a trauma-informed lens is imperative, as it aligns with emerging perspectives that emphasize relational health as a key indicator of successful probation completion (Crumé et al., 2021; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Beyond the impacts of trauma, these youths also face serious mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, which often co-occur with substance use disorders (Brown et al., 2020; Siennick et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). For instance, studies have shown that over 60% of justice-involved youth have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Skinner-Osei et al., 2019), with approximately 30% to 50% meeting criteria for a substance use disorder (McMickens et al., 2024; Walker et al., 2022). Among these, co-occurring disorders are particularly challenging, as they hinder the youths' ability to follow probation requirements and engage in rehabilitation programs (Finseth et al., 2022; McMickens et al., 2024). Interventions that incorporate mental health resources and community engagement are needed to stabilize these youths' environments and promoting their overall wellbeing, which is essential for successful probation completion (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Lee & Taxman, 2020). Traditional punitive approaches are often ineffective and can even hinder probation completion by failing to address the underlying challenges these youths face (McMickens et al., 2024; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2020; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Understanding and addressing the complex, multidimensional needs of justice-involved youth is essential for effective intervention and rehabilitation. These youths face unique developmental challenges that require individualized, supportive approaches to foster their growth and resilience. (Basanta et al., 2018; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Finseth et al., 2022; Kapoor et al., 2018).

Intervention Strategies

Evidence-informed intervention strategies for justice-involved youth are fundamental in reducing reoffending and promoting healthy outcomes. The Department of Justice Canada (2021) conducted an evaluation of the Youth Justice Initiative (YJI) from 2015 to 2020 to assess its relevance, effectiveness, and efficacy. The YJI was established to support the implementation of the YCJA (2002) by funding programs and services that address the needs of youth experiencing intersection with the juvenile criminal legal system. The evaluation found that the YJI remains relevant in addressing youth criminal legal issues, such as decreasing youth crime rates and increasingly complex cases involving mental health and addictions. One of the key components of the YJI is the Intensive Support and Supervision Program (ISSP), which provides more support and closer monitoring than standard probation. The ISSP is implemented in five provinces and territories and has demonstrated significant promise in reducing reoffending among high-risk youth. The evaluation emphasizes the importance of maintaining and expanding funding for these programs to adapt to evolving youth justice needs (Department of Justice Canada, 2021).

The Public Safety Canada (2009) report on best practices for chronic and persistent youth offenders in Canada highlights the importance of multi-agency and intervention models. These models involve partnerships between police, social services, and community organizations to provide comprehensive support to youth offenders. For example, the Multi-Agency Preventative Program (MAPP) in Manitoba brings together numerous agencies such as the Brandon School Division, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre, and local police to address the needs of justice-involved youth. By coordinating efforts and sharing information, these programs aim to provide a holistic approach to intervention to address issues such as family dysfunction, mental health, and substance use (Public Safety Canada, 2009).

Similar initiatives in British Columbia, like the Vancouver Police Department's Youth Services Section, allocate officers to work with social workers and probation officers to monitor high-risk youth and provide rehabilitative services (Public Safety Canada, 2009). These collaborative efforts have shown promise in reducing reoffending and supporting justice-involved youths within their communities.

Under the YCJA (2002), several correctional and community services are available as sentencing options for justice-involved youth. These include pre-trial detention, secure custody, and various community-based services. Pre-trail detention is used to temporarily hold a youth in custody while awaiting trial or sentencing (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Secure custody involves detaining youths in facilities equipped with security measures and constant observation (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Additionally, the YCJA introduced the community portion of custody supervision in April 2003, allowing the final one-third of most custody sentences to be served under community supervision (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Among the community-based sentencing options, intensive support and supervision, deferred custody and supervision, and supervised probation are prominent alternatives to incarceration (Statistics Canada, 2024a). These interventions aim to provide closer monitoring and support, with supervised probation being one of the most disposed community-based interventions (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Public Safety Canada, 2009). Under supervised probation, youths are placed under the supervision of a probation officer or other designated person.

Effective probation practices require a balance between supervision and support. Nelson and colleagues (2024) emphasize the importance of individualized treatment plans or targeted referrals that consider the specific needs and circumstances of each youth. Incorporating evidence-based practices can help youth to develop improved decision-making and problem-

solving skills. For instance, training probation officers to act as change agents rather than mere enforcers of rules can positively impact probation effectiveness (Ashford & Gallagher, 2019). Comprehensive training programs for probation officers that include components on effective communication, trauma-informed crisis intervention, and building therapeutic alliances with justice-involved youth on probation can positively impact probation outcomes (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; McMickens et al., 2024; Mueller et al., 2023). Training that includes cultural competency and trauma-informed care have been shown to improve outcomes for structurally marginalized youth populations (Ashford & Gallagher, 2019; McMickens et al., 2024; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

As one of the key interventions within the broader spectrum of juvenile criminal legal strategies, supervised probation stands out for its potential to balance accountability with rehabilitative support. Although various interventions aim to address the complex needs of justice-involved youth, probation remains a widely used alternative to incarceration that offers structured oversight while allowing youths to remain in their communities. This targeted approach not only provides an alternative to custodial sentencing, but also directs attention to the importance of in-community and wraparound individualized support that is effective, evidence-based, and allows for integration of the individual and their community in real-time. Overall, the success of probation depends on addressing the unique challenges faced by justice-involved youth.

Enhancing Current Probation Practices by Addressing Barriers

Noncompliance with probation conditions is a prevalent concern among JIYP, often stemming from a combination of socioeconomic and systemic barriers, emotional/behavioural challenges, and unrealistic expectations. Youth from marginalized communities frequently lack

access to essential resources such as safe and stable housing, educational support, and mental health services (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). This lack of resources exacerbates the already challenging difficulties faced by JIYP. For example, conditions that require regular school attendance or employment can be particularly challenging for JIYP facing unsafe or unstable housing or lack of transportation (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Kapoor et al., 2018; McMickens et al., 2024). Programs that offer community-based alternatives provide essential resources and support to help JIYP to comply with probation conditions, thereby reducing the risk of reoffending (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Gale-Bentz et al., 2019).

Emotional and behavioural disorders are common among JIYP, often leading to noncompliance with probation conditions (Folk et al., 2021; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019). Such mental health difficulties substantially hinder JIYP's ability to comply with probation conditions (Folk et al., 2021; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019). Without adequate mental health support, these challenges remain untreated and further complicate JIYP's rehabilitative successes and increase their risk of being part of the criminal legal system (Folk et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2013; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019). These barriers make it increasingly difficult to comply with probation conditions, which are often designed without considering these underlying challenges and constraints (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022).

Schwalbe and Koetzle (2020) emphasize that the clarity of probation conditions significantly impacts compliance rates, with JIYP who clearly understand their probation conditions as being more likely to comply with them. This suggests the need for improved communication between probation officers and the JIYP who are on their caseload (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020). Probation conditions are often complex and unrealistic, failing to consider the

individual circumstances for the youth (Goldstein et al., 2019). The complexity and lack of clarity can stem from various factors, including insufficient explanation of probationary conditions by probation officers and individual youth-based factors such as cognitive or emotional challenges (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020). As a result, these issues can lead to confusion and difficulty in adherence, particularly when probation requirements are not tailored to the developmental stage and needs of the youth (Goldstein et al., 2019). Furthermore, probation conditions that are more individualized and tailored to the unique challenges faced by JIYP (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022), in addition to being trauma-informed (Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019; Zelechoski et al., 2024), could improve probation compliance rates.

Moreover, NeMoyer and colleagues (2020) outline how punitive measures for noncompliance of probation conditions, such as the revocation of probation over minor infractions or additional legal consequences, can create a cycle of failure for JIYP. These measures often do not address the underlying systemic barriers contributing to noncompliance, such as lack of access to resources, mental health challenges, and socioeconomic challenges (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; NeMoyer et al., 2020). Such punitive measures fail to consider the developmental and environmental factors affecting youths' behaviours, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing these root causes rather than simply enforcing compliance (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; NeMoyer et al., 2020). The mismatch between the demands of probation and the realities of JIYP's lives can lead to repeated violations and subsequent legal consequences, overall perpetuating a cycle of noncompliance and reoffending (Goldstein et al., 2019; NeMoyer et al., 2020).

Instead of punitive measures, a focus on providing supportive interventions that address these underlying issues should be reprioritized. For instance, probation officers adopting a more supportive role may help JIYP to understand their conditions and provide the necessary support and resources to comply (NeMoyer et al., 2020). Supportive interventions can include regular check-ins, individualized case management, and connecting youth to community resources such as counseling, educational support, and housing assistance (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). By aligning probation conditions with the realistic capabilities and needs of JIYP, the criminal legal system can foster healthier outcomes and reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022).

A relationally informed program, which focuses on building trust and supportive relationships, can meet important developmental needs by providing consistent emotional support, addressing trauma, and fostering resilience (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Crumé et al., 2021; McMickens et al., 2024; Zelechoski et al., 2024). This approach emphasizes the importance of stable, supportive relationships in helping JIYP develop healthier coping strategies and social skills, which are crucial for compliance with probation conditions (Li et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2023; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Unique considerations in implementing such programs include ensuring accessibility to mental health services and incorporating community-based support networks that reflect the cultural and social contexts of the youth (Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). These elements align with the need for a more supportive and responsive probation system that addresses the root causes of noncompliance and promotes long-term rehabilitation (Drawbridge et al., 2019; Logan-Greene et al., 2020). Although the integration of supportive and responsive probation systems is fundamental for ensuring compliance, educational environments play an equally integral role in reinforcing these efforts.

By leveraging educational engagement, probation programs can further support justice-involved youth, thereby providing them with the structure and stability required to successfully meet probation conditions.

Leveraging the Educational Context

Educational engagement provides JIYP with a structured environment that can mitigate risk factors associated with offending behaviour. For example, educational measures, such as school attendance and involvement in academic activities, can significantly reduce the likelihood of reoffending among JIYP (Crumé et al., 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Moreover, youths who are actively involved in educational activities show improved academic performance and higher rates of attendance, which is crucial in meeting probation conditions and reducing the likelihood of reoffending (Crumé et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2024). Overall, educational engagement serves as a critical component in the total success of probation programs (Crumé et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2024; Noorman & Brancale, 2023).

One of the major challenges faced by JIYP is chronic absenteeism, which is closely linked to lack of academic success, school dropout, and increased offending behaviour (Mueller & Stoddard, 2006). Non-punitive judicial intervention, combined with multi-agency collaboration, effectively improved attendance and academic performance among structurally marginalized JIYP by providing tailored interventions that included regular monitoring of attendance, individual counseling sessions, and coordinated efforts between school officials, social services, and juvenile criminal legal court systems (Mueller & Stoddard, 2006). For example, the Ada County Attendance Court program reduced absenteeism by 30% and improved academic performance by establishing clear expectations, offering incentives for attendance, and involving legal guardians in the process (Mueller & Stoddard, 2006).

The detrimental effects of zero tolerance policies on educational engagement contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Daly et al., 2016; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Such policies often lead to increased suspensions and expulsions, in turn removing students from educational settings and increasing their risk of intersection with the criminal legal system (Daly et al., 2016; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). This punitive approach not only disrupts the educational trajectories of students, but also exacerbates existing inequalities (Daly et al., 2016; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). In contrast, shifting towards restorative and supportive disciplinary practices can mitigate these adverse effects. Restorative practices focus on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships, which helps to keep youth in school and engaged in their education (Daly et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2021). Furthermore, restorative practices within schools, such as peer mediation and conflict resolution, help build a supportive community and reduce disciplinary incidents, resultantly keeping youths in school and engaged in their education and reducing their likelihood of reoffending (Crumé et al., 2021; Daly et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2021). Adopting restorative and supportive disciplinary practices plays a vital role in breaking the cycle of incarceration (Daly et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2021).

Educational programs tailored to meet these specific needs can increase engagement and improve outcomes by addressing individual differences and fostering supportive learning environments. Inclusive programming, particularly for those with more intensive needs, plays an important role in this regard. Specific practices such as individualized learning plans, one-on-one tutoring, and small group instruction help cater to the unique needs of these youths, thereby enhancing their educational engagement (Kim et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2024). Fostering strong connections to school and promoting active participation in academic and extracurricular activities can serve as effective interventions for reducing reoffending among JIYP by providing

a sense of belonging and purpose (Crumé et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2024). For example, mentoring programs and after-school clubs offer additional support and positive role models, which are essential in guiding youth towards positive behaviours and academic success (Farrington et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021). These interventions work together to create an environment where justice-involved youth can thrive academically and socially, ultimately leading to improved long-term outcomes (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Lang et al., 2024).

Integration of Mechanisms for Healthy Outcomes

Mechanisms for achieving healthy outcomes among justice-involved youth involve several key components. First, integrating multiple services is essential to comprehensively address the diverse needs of these youths. Holistic support systems aim to provide comprehensive assistance that spans educational, emotional, social, and behavioural domains while recognizing that JIYP face interconnected issues (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al. 2019; Siennick et al., 2020). Programs that include educational support, mental health services, substance use treatment, and vocational training to ensure that all critical areas are addressed simultaneously, thus promoting long-term positive outcomes (Church et al., 2021; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2024). Furthermore, interventions that address ACEs and substance use highlight the importance of providing supportive alternatives to incarceration that address underlying issues contributing to offending behaviour (Folk et al., 2021; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020).

Flexibility and structure are essential in these interventions. Programs must adapt to the unique needs and circumstances of each youth, incorporating varying forms of support such as mentorship, educational tutoring, recreational activities, and job training (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al. 2019; Siennick et al., 2020). Although structure is provided through

consistent and reliable programming, flexibility allows these programs to modify their approaches as the needs of youths evolve, ensuring continuous relevance and support (Cook et al., 2005).

Accessibility is another significant factor contributing to the success of interventions. Unlike institutional settings, community-based programs can be designed to be more geographically and financially accessible for youth in the criminal legal system who experience difficulties with transportation, finances, or time constraints (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Locating programs within communities close to youths' homes can reduce travel barriers and offering low-cost or free participation can alleviate financial stressors. This accessibility is vital for maintaining consistent engagement and support, which are crucial for successful rehabilitation and probation completion (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023).

Educational engagement plays an integral role in probation success, as ensuring that JIYP remain actively engaged in their education aids them in both meeting probationary requirements and serves as a protective factor against reoffending (Crumé et al., 2021). For youths returning to the school system after incarceration, successful re-entry is often hindered by a lack of coordinated support and understanding from educational institutions (Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Furthermore, comprehensive, individualized educational programs that support educational engagement can effectively address these challenges (Kim et al., 2021).

Participation in structured, prosocial activities is important for building skills and strengths among justice-involved youth. When youth are actively involved in activities such as community service, arts, sports, and other extracurriculars, these help to build a sense of responsibility, belongingness, and reciprocity (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Finseth et al., 2022).

They also provide youths with opportunities to develop new skills and interests, which are vital for personal growth and future success (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016).

Strength-based approaches focus on the assets and potential of justice-involved youth rather than their deficits. This positive focus helps to build self-esteem, motivation, and a positive self-concept as being a capable and valuable community member (Finseth et al., 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Identifying and nurturing the strengths of each youth fosters a sense of empowerment and can be transformative, which can help them to develop a more positive self-image and outlook on their future (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Building strong support networks is crucial. This includes involving peers, mentors, teachers, and community leaders who provide ongoing support and guidance (Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Involving community-based providers in the probation process can significantly influence probation officers' recommendations and decisions (Gale-Bentz et al., 2019). A collaborative approach ensures that justice-involved youth receive comprehensive supports that are tailored to their needs, which enhances their ability to comply with probation conditions and experience successful rehabilitation (Gale-Bentz et al., 2019).

Cultural competence is another essential feature of effective interventions. This involves the ability of service providers to understand, respect, and effectively respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of youth from diverse backgrounds. Training staff to recognize cultural differences, address biases, and implement culturally appropriate practices is vital (McMickens et al., 2024; Myers & Farrell, 2008; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Culturally competent programs are more likely to effectively engage youth and provide them with meaningful support as they specifically integrate these principles into their structure and processes, ensuring that all aspects are relevant and responsive (Department of Justice

Canada, 2021; Klymkiw et al., 2024; Zelechoski et al., 2024). For instance, programs designed

for Indigenous youth may incorporate traditional practices such as involving community Elders

in mentorship roles and integrating cultural ceremonies and healing practices, which have shown

improvements in outcomes by reducing reoffending and enhancing community integration

(Church et al., 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

      Mechanisms for achieving healthy outcomes among justice-involved youth involve

several key components. First, integrating multiple services such as educational support, mental

health, and vocational training comprehensively addresses the unique needs of these youths

(Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Folk et al., 2021; Lee

& Taxman, 2020; Nelson et al., 2024; Siennick et al., 2020). Second, flexibility and structure are

vital as they allow for programs to adapt to each youth's unique circumstances while providing

consistent support (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2005; Siennick

et al., 2020). Third, accessibility to community-based programs promotes consistent engagement

and reduces barriers like transportation and financial constraints (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016;

Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021 Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Fourth, educational engagement is

essential, as it supports probation success and acts as a protective factor (Crumé et al., 2021; Kim

et al., 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Fifth, prosocial activities, such as community service

and sports, promote responsibility and skill development (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Finseth et

al., 2022). Sixth, strength-based approaches focus on the assets of youth, which boosts self-

esteem and positive self-concepts (Finseth et al. 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Seventh, strong

support networks, such as peers and community leaders, strengthen compliance with probation

conditions (Gale-Bentz et al., 2019; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Finally, cultural competence in

programs solidifies that interventions are relevant and effective (Church et al., 2021; Department

of Justice Canada, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Understanding these mechanisms provides a foundational knowledge of the needs and opportunities presented by each individual youth, which is imperative for tailoring interventions effectively. These mechanisms can be systematically actioned to optimize outcomes for justice-involved youth, thereby affirming that interventions are both need-responsive and opportunity-driven.

Person-Centered Wraparound Programs

Person-centered wraparound programs are comprehensive, community-based interventions that are designed to address the multidimensional needs of structurally marginalized JIYP. Community-based interventions such as person-centered wraparound programs have proven effective in promoting positive outcomes for JIYP. These interventions focus on providing support within a youth's community, addressing numerous systemic factors, and creating an environment that is conducive to rehabilitation and reintegration. These programs can be tailored to reflect the cultural, social, and economic contexts of the youth they serve, which makes them more relevant and effective (Cook et al., 2005; Crumé et al., 2021; Kapoor et al., 2018; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

A distinguishing feature of successful community-based interventions is their holistic integration of multiple services that target the diverse needs of JIYP. By coordinating educational, mental health, vocational, and social services within a single framework, these programs ensure that each aspect of a youth's life is cohesively addressed. This approach safeguards that interventions are need-responsive and contextually and developmentally appropriate, thereby enhancing their effectiveness (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Kapoor et al., 2018; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Person-centered wraparound programs emphasize individualized and coordinated care that involves the youth and a team of professionals to create and implement tailored support plans. Person-centered wraparound programs have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing reoffending risks and improving various outcomes for JIYP, including adherence to probation requirements (Coldiron et al., 2019; Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Pappas & Dent, 2021). These programs often incorporate evidence-based interventions and a holistic approach to support a youth's needs across multiple domains (Coldiron et al., 2019; Klymkiw et al., 2024; Pappas & Dent, 2021). These interventions are designed to address the complex needs of these youths by involving their communities in the support process, thereby fostering a supportive environment for behavioural change and rehabilitation (Coldiron et al., 2019; Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Siennick et al., 2020). By emphasizing individualized and coordinated care, person-centered wraparound programs ensure that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of each youth (Zelechoski et al., 2024). This approach is integral to creating relevant and effective interventions that enhance the likelihood of successful outcomes for JIYP (Coldiron et al., 2019; Pappas & Dent, 2021).

Person-centered wraparound approaches are characterized by several key components that distinguish it from more conventional intervention models. These components include individualized care plans, a strengths-based approach, and the involvement of a multidisciplinary team. Each youth receives a plan that addresses their unique needs and circumstances, which is collaboratively developed with the youth and a team of professionals to ensure that interventions are relevant and effective (Coldiron et al., 2019; Siennick et al., 2020). The individualized nature of person-centered wraparound programs allows for adaptation to specific challenges and strengths of each youth, in turn enhancing the likelihood of successful outcomes (Coldiron et al.,

2019; Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Myers & Farrell, 2008; Public Safety Canada, 2009; Siennick et al., 2020). Person-centered wraparound programs are strength-based, helping to build resilience and empower youth to overcome their challenges (Coldiron et al., 2019; Pappas & Dent, 2021; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Involving a multidisciplinary team, including professionals from various fields such as social work, education, mental health, and juvenile justice, is essential to providing comprehensive support (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Siennick et al., 2020). This team regularly reviews progress and adjusts a youth's care plan as needed to ensure that interventions remain aligned with the youth's evolving needs (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Siennick et al., 2020). Additionally, person-centered wraparound programs emphasize community involvement by leveraging local resources and supports to create a care network that extends beyond the immediate services provided (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Klymkiw et al., 2024; Siennick et al., 2020). This approach highlights the importance of cultural competence within person-centered wraparound programs, ensuring that services are relevant to the cultural backgrounds of the youth served, which is essential for effective intervention and emphasizes the need for interventions to be responsive to individual and community contexts (Klymkiw et al., 2024; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Effective implementation of person-centered wraparound programs requires coordination among various agencies, specialized training and supervision of staff, and adequate funding and resources (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Pappas & Dent, 2021). Successful person-centered wraparound programs require the cooperation of multiple agencies, including schools, social services, and juvenile criminal legal systems to ensure that youth receive comprehensive support tailored to their needs (Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Siennick et al., 2020).

Staff involved in person-centered wraparound programs require specialized training to effectively deliver interventions, with ongoing supervision being fundamental to maintaining both the quality and fidelity of the services and interventions provided (Bouchard & Wong, 2018; Coldiron et al., 2019; Siennick et al., 2020). Furthermore, adequate funding is necessary to support the diverse services offered through person-centered wraparound programs, as financial constraints can limit the availability and quality of services, thereby impacting the program's effectiveness (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Pappas & Dent, 2021).

Person-centered wraparound programs can significantly reduce the likelihood of reoffending and increase probation compliance among JIYP by providing targeted interventions that address youth's needs and promote prosocial behaviours (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Coldiron et al., 2019; Crumé et al., 2021; Siennick et al., 2020). For example, Coldiron and colleagues (2019) found that youth involved in person-centered wraparound program coordination were less likely to be re-arrested and showed greater residential stability than those receiving treatment as usual. By integrating educational support into care plans, person-centered wraparound programs help JIYP to stay engaged in school and improve their academic outcomes, thereby reducing their risk of future intersection with the criminal legal system (Coldiron et al., 2019; Siennick et al., 2020). Additionally, person-centered wraparound programs focus on improving youths' social skills and behaviours to help them build positive relationships and foster community reintegration, in turn contributing to long-term positive outcomes (Coldiron et al., 2019).

The Current Study

Community-based educational interventions play an important role in engaging JIYP and supporting their probation requirements. ICHS's after-school Outreach program is one such

example of how community-based initiatives can promote educational engagement. By offering a variety of after-school activities that foster prosocial engagement and community involvement, the program provides a supportive environment where JIYP can complete probationary hours, engage with peers, and access essential support. Such programs not only aim to help in promoting probation success, but also to build a sense of community and belongingness among structurally marginalized JIYP.

The aim of the current study is to conduct a secondary descriptive analysis to explore and describe potential differences and trends in variables and outcomes related to participation in ICHS's after-school Outreach program for JIYP completing probationary hours. In addition, it endeavours to provide future research with a foundation to base future areas of exploration regarding successful completion of probationary hours for JIYP and may provide inspiration or motivation for policymakers and/or individuals involved in the criminal legal system to rethink or reshape probationary conditions as being more restorative versus punitive.

This study has three main research questions:

- What proportion of youths successfully complete their probation hours through ICHS's after-school Outreach program?

- What are the characteristics of youths who do and those who do not complete their hours through ICHS's after-school Outreach program? Variables examined include age, self-reported gender, self-reported cultural background, academic engagement (i.e., total credits earned), Outreach hours completed, and charges/crimes committed.

- What programs and supports have these youths engaged with as a result of participating in ICHS's after-school Outreach program?

The three research questions are exploratory in nature, and as such there are no hypotheses.

Methods

Study Design

The study utilized a secondary descriptive analysis design and followed an exploratory approach. Many students at ICHS experience chronic absenteeism (Daly et al., 2016; Mueller & Stoddard, 2006) and diminished access to resources (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023); as a result, it would be difficult to structure more in-depth or face-to-face research designs that place unfair demands on them. Furthermore, the student population frequently undergoes attrition throughout the academic year, and actively conducting research with students who are justice-involved and undergo attrition may result in lost opportunities to learn from and about them (Chatfield, 2020). It is not always guaranteed that there will be students registered at the school who are justice-involved and subject to probation conditions that involve community service and/or hours that must be completed. For these reasons, use of a non-experimental design (i.e., secondary descriptive analysis) to answer research questions surrounding ICHS's mobile student population in this context was warranted. Conducting research in this manner is inconspicuous, requires less resources, and can garner both contextual and comparative data (Boslaugh, 2007). This method of research undertaking would minimize harm, reduce risks, reduce the burden of actively or effortfully participating in research as a structurally marginalized youth experiencing intersection with the criminal legal system, and protect their personal information, all the while providing valuable insights into potential program improvements to promote enhanced welfare and future positive outcomes for youths in similar situations.

To address the first question regarding what proportion of youths successfully complete their probation hours through ICHS's after-school Outreach program, the analysis focused on the variable of probation completion status (i.e., completed or not completed). The data for this variable was derived from ICHS's program records, indicating whether each youth had completed their required probation hours through the Outreach program or not. Probation completion has been linked to numerous factors, including educational engagement, mental health support, and access to community-based resources (Goldstein et al., 2019; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020).

To address the second question regarding group differences between completers and non-completers, the analysis looked at six variables. These included age at initial registration, self-reported gender, self-reported cultural background, total credits earned, total number of Outreach hours completed, and the total number of charges/crimes committed (including re-offenses). The data for these variables were extracted from ICHS's program records. Youths actively involved in structured educational programs are more likely to meet probation requirements and experience reduced reoffending (Crumé et al., 2021; Klymkiw et al., 2024; Siennick et al., 2020).

Finally, to address the third question regarding descriptive considerations of the programs and supports that these youths engaged with, the analysis looked at the two overarching program types offered by ICHS: (1) Legal Support (LS); and (2) Youth Engagement (YE) support. Total LSs accessed and total YEs accessed were examined independently, with a breakdown of each program type accessed. The data for these program types were extracted from ICHS's program data. This was completed to determine how many different services were used and how often each service was used.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participant data inclusion criteria included: (1) must be a registered student at ICHS; (2) must be justice-involved and on probation necessitating community service hours completion; and (3) must be engaged in the after-school Outreach program while completing community service hours. Participant data exclusion criteria included: (1) ICHS students who were justice-involved and not on probation; (2) students who were justice-involved and on probation but not necessitating completion of probation hours; (3) students who engaged in the after-school Outreach program but not for the purpose of completing probation hours; and (4) student whose initial registration date was during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Sampling Strategy

The current study employed a purposive (i.e., judgmental) sampling strategy, more specifically a homogeneous sampling strategy, due to the uniqueness of the population being studied and the characteristics they shared (i.e., justice-involved on probation completing required hours). Timeframes for data sampling were restricted to September 1, 2014, to August 29, 2017. Data beginning from February 2014 was originally to be included; however, for the purpose of having a more even distribution of data for analysis (i.e., full academic years) and due to registration data before February 2014 being unavailable, data prior to September 1, 2014, was removed.

Participants

As data was pre-collected and there was no active engagement with study participants, no formal participant recruitment procedures were used for the purpose of this study. In addition, as all students' data was de-identified, and contacting many of the students to include their data in the study was unfeasible, obtaining consent for the purpose of using their data was not possible.

The current study received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (Pro00133481).

The final study sample ($N = 33$) included data of participants who met inclusion criteria. The sample contained 16 females (48.5%) and 17 males (51.5%). Gender was self-identified by participants at registration and no other gender options were identified. The mean age of the sample upon initial registration to ICHS was 16.7 years of age, with the mean age of female participants being 16.3 years of age and the mean age of male participants being 17.1 years of age. The overall sample ages ranged from 14 to 19 years old at initial registration at ICHS.

Data Collection Methods

Existing secondary data was stored on ICHS's custom-built database, with its servers located in-house. At present, ICHS is on its fourth iteration of its database version, so data that existed in previous versions was no longer available for the purpose of the current study (i.e., before February 2014). Data was entered into two separate password-protected Excel documents in ICHS's encrypted and password-protected data storage site that has servers located in Canada. The first password-protected Excel document (i.e., Master spreadsheet) contained youth names with an associated identifier code. The second password-protected Excel document (i.e., Analysis) contained no identifying information for youths, which housed all collected data.

Initial exploratory data collection involved determining which youths were justice-involved on probation and had engaged in ICHS's after-school Outreach program by accessing ICHS's now-retired Legal Support (LS) forms. These forms documented youths' engagement with the school's LS Worker, which included time spent addressing probationary hours during the after-school Outreach program and the number of times attended. Information from LSs also included numbers of charges/crimes committed, in addition to other LSs accessed (e.g.,

accompanied the student to court, contacted their probation officer, assisted the student with addressing a warrant, etc.), which were coded and tabulated. Once this data was entered, youths' data pertaining to total credits earned while registered at ICHS were collected. Lastly, Youth Engagement (YE; formerly known as One-to-One) forms were examined for keywords related to emotional and/or behavioral and structural supports provided to youths (e.g., "housing", "addictions", "mental health", etc.), which were then summed. These forms document youths' engagement with ICHS's Social Workers, YE Staff, and LS Worker, which included available support(s) accessed.

Data Preparation

All participant data underwent de-identification and verification of completeness and accuracy of data entries in the "Master" and "Analysis" Excel documents. Verification of completeness and accuracy of data entries involved thoroughly reviewing each data entry to ensure all required fields were complete. Any missing data points were flagged and cross-checked with original source documents to rectify any omissions. After the removal of participant data who did not meet inclusion criteria, the initial sample totaled 53 participants. Exclusion of incomplete records, where registration data was unavailable before February 2014, resulted in listwise deletion of 20 participants from the data set for a final data set of 33 participants. Following this, the final data set was imported into IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 29) prior to analysis.

Analysis

To answer the first research question, sample characteristics were gathered to determine the proportion of youths who successfully completed their probation hours and to understand basic characteristics of the data set grouped by probation completion.

To answer the second question, sample characteristics were gathered to explore group differences or notable trends between completers and non-completers. These variables included:

- Self-identified gender at initial registration,

- Age at initial registration,

- Self-identified cultural background at initial registration,

- Total credits earned,

- Outreach hours completed,

- And total charge/crimes committed (including those that occurred pre-probation in addition to those that were accrued during a participant's probationary period).

Finally, to answer the third research question, participation in two ICHS program areas, LSs and YE supports, is described. Description of program involvement included number of youths engaged in each activity.

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Results

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Probation Completion

Among the 33 participants in this study, 10 (30.3%) successfully completed their probation hours through ICHS's after-school Outreach program. 23 participants (69.7%) did not complete their probation hours. This probation completion rate provides a foundation for further exploration of trends or differences between completers and non-completers, in terms of sample characteristics and engagement with available programs and supports.

Participant Characteristics

Table 1 contains sample characteristics regarding demographic (i.e., self-identified gender, age at initial registration, self-identified cultural background), academic (i.e., total credits earned), and legal characteristics (i.e., Outreach hours attended, and total charges/crimes

committed) related to whether participants completed their probation hours or not.

Table 1

Sample Demographic, Academic, and Legal Characteristics by Probation Completion

Variable	Completed (*n* = 10)		Incomplete (*n* = 23)		Overall (*N* = 33)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Self-Identified Gender						
Female	8	80.0	8	34.8	16	48.5
Male	2	20.0	15	65.2	17	51.5
Age at Initial Registration						
14 to 17	6	60.0	16	69.6	22	66.7
18 to 19	4	40.0	7	30.4	11	33.3
Self-Identified Cultural Background						
Indigenous	8	80.0	22	95.7	29	87.9
Non-Indigenous	2	20.0	1	4.3	4	12.1
	n	*M*	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*
Credits Earned	217	21.7	301	13.1	518	15.7
Outreach Hours Completed	166	16.6	410	17.8	576	17.5
Charges/Crimes Committed	21	2.1	113	4.9	134	4.1

*Note. M = mean.

Table 1 provides an overview of sample demographic, academic, and legal characteristics divided by whether participants had completed their probation hours or not. Among the participants, 48.5% were self-identified female and 51.5% were self-identified male at initial registration, with no other gender options identified. Notably, a higher proportion of females completed their probation hours (80.0%) compared to males (20.0%) out of the 10 participants (30.3% of the total sample) who did complete their hours. The mean age of completers was 16.9 years of age with a range of 15 to 19 years, and the mean age of non-completers was 16.6 years

of age with a range of 14 to 19 years. The age distribution at initial registration showed that most participants were between the ages of 14 to 17 years old (66.7%) for the total sample, with a slightly higher percentage in the incomplete group (69.6%) in comparison to the completed group (60.0%). Most participants self-identified as Indigenous (87.9%).

Participants who completed their probation hours appeared to earn more total credits (M = 21.7) on average when compared to those who did not complete probation hours (M = 13.1). In terms of Outreach hours completed, the average was similar between the groups. Those who completed their probation hours averaged 16.6 hours, while those who did not complete their hours averaged slightly higher at 17.8 hours. Those who completed their probation hours had an average of 2.1 charges/crimes committed, and those who did not complete their probation hours had a higher average of 4.9 charges/crimes committed.

Program and Support Engagement

Support services accessed by the youths are categorized by Legal Support (LS) and Youth Engagement (YE) supports. Table 2 contains sample characteristics regarding LSs accessed by whether a participant had completed their probation hours or not, and Table 3 contains sample characteristics regarding YE supports accessed by whether a participant had completed their probation hours or not.

Table 2

Sample Characteristics of Legal Supports Accessed by Probation Completion

Support Type	Completed (n = 10)		Incomplete (n = 23)		Overall (N = 33)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Contact Probation Officer	9	90.0	21	91.3	30	90.9
Contact EYAC	8	80.0	16	69.6	24	72.7

Court with Student	7	70.0	16	69.6	23	69.7
Contact Legal Aid	1	10.0	6	26.1	7	21.2
Contact Police Officer	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	3.0
Warrant Assistance	2	20.0	6	26.1	8	24.2
Court without Student	3	30.0	7	30.4	10	30.3
Contact Custodial Student	0	0.0	3	13.0	3	9.1
Probation Extension	3	30.0	6	26.1	9	27.3
Contact Crown Prosecutor	2	20.0	8	34.8	10	30.3
Police Station with Student	1	10.0	3	13.0	4	12.1
Contact Lawyer	1	10.0	5	21.7	6	18.2
Contact Courthouse	1	10.0	2	8.7	3	9.1
Contact RCMP	1	10.0	0	0.0	1	3.0
Fingerprinting Assistance	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	3.0
Contact Duty Counsel	0	0.0	3	13.0	3	9.1
Legal Support Letter	0	0.0	3	13.0	3	9.1
Bring to Remand Centre	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	3.0

Note: EYAC = Edmonton Youth Attendance Centre; RCMP = Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Table 2 outlines the sample characteristics for LSs accessed by participants, categorized by whether they completed their probation hours or not. Among those who completed their probation hours, 90% received assistance in contacting their probation officer, which closely mirrored the 91.3% of non-completers who did the same. Contacting the Edmonton Youth Attendance Centre (EYAC) was also frequent, with 80% of completers and 69.6% of non-completers accessing this support. Both groups showed similar levels of engagement in attending court with ICHS's Legal Support Worker (70% of completers compared to 69.6% of non-completers) and obtaining probation extensions (30% of completers compared to 26.1% of non-completers). However, non-completers were more likely to access support such as contacting Legal Aid (26.1% compared to 10% of completers) and contacting the Crown Prosecutor (34.8%

compared to 20% of completers). Additionally, certain supports like contacting duty counsel, fingerprinting assistance, and bringing participants to the Edmonton Remand Centre were only accessed by non-completers. Overall, while both completers and non-completers accessed a broad range of LSs, non-completers seemed to show slightly higher engagement with LSs.

Table 3

Sample Characteristics of Youth Engagement Supports Accessed by Probation Completion

Support Type	Completed (*n* = 10)		Incomplete (*n* = 23)		Overall (*N* = 33)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mental Health	9	90.0	14	60.9	23	69.7
Medical	7	70.0	16	69.6	23	69.7
Suicide Intervention	4	40.0	9	39.1	13	39.4
Parenting/pregnancy	5	50.0	8	34.8	13	39.4
Transportation	8	80.0	20	87.0	28	84.6
Employment	5	50.0	6	26.1	11	33.3
Attendance	7	70.0	12	52.2	19	57.6
Legal Support	4	40.0	7	30.4	11	33.3
Cultural	8	80.0	14	60.9	22	66.7
Foodbank	3	30.0	7	30.4	10	30.3
Housing	7	70.0	18	78.3	25	75.8
Finances	6	60.0	16	69.6	22	66.7
Child and Family Services	6	60.0	15	65.2	21	63.6
Addictions	6	60.0	17	73.9	23	69.7
Personal Hygiene	0	0.0	5	21.7	5	15.2
Identification	4	40.0	10	43.5	14	42.4
Clothing	1	10.0	4	17.4	5	15.2

Table 3 outlines the sample characteristics for Youth Engagement (YEs) supports

accessed by participants, categorized by whether they completed their probation hours or not. The analysis shows a broad range of engagement across both groups. Among those who completed their probation hours, 90% accessed mental health support, while 60.9% of non-completers did the same. Mental health support included referrals to psychiatric professionals and engaging in trauma-informed informal counselling support. Both groups showed high engagement with transportation support (80% of completers and 87% of non-completers). Transportation support included driving participants to and from school or appointments, as well as providing bus tickets as needed. However, completers appeared more likely to engage with employment supports (50% compared to 26.1% of non-completers) and cultural supports (80% compared to 60.9% of non-completers), while non-completers appeared more likely to engage with housing supports (78.3% compared to 70% of completers) and addiction supports (73.9% compared to 60% of completers). Employment supports involved assistance with developing a résumé and searching for employment online. Cultural support included smudging, beading, attending sweats and/or cultural camps, engaging in sharing circles and/or prayer, discussions around cultural teachings, and creating other cultural items (i.e., dreamcatchers, powwow drums, and medicine bags). Housing support involved referring participants to shelters and other transitional housing, looking for housing online, and assistance with housing applications. Addictions support included informal counselling regarding addictions, referring participants to addictions counsellors, and providing psychoeducation on substance use. Notably, personal hygiene support was only accessed by non-completers (21.7%). Personal hygiene support involved providing participants with necessary items such as shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and feminine hygiene products.

Discussion

The overall purpose of this study was to answer three questions: (1) the proportion of JIYP attending ICHS's after-school Outreach program who successfully completed their probation hours; (2) differences between the youths who completed probation hours and those who did not complete their hours; and (3) exploratory descriptives regarding the service use (i.e., programs and supports) that these youths engaged with because of their participation.

Probation Completion

For the first research question regarding the proportion of participants who completed probation hours, 10 out of 33 participants (30.3%) successfully completed their probation hours through ICHS's after school Outreach program between September 2014 to August 2017. The completion rates observed in this study reveal the ongoing difficulties faced by JIYP in adhering to probation requirements, individual circumstances, and the level of support provided during the probation period (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020; Skinner-Osei et al, 2019; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

Factors such as the complexity of the probation requirements, youths' personal circumstances, and levels of support provided during the probation period are often cited as key determinants of probation completion rates (Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Zelechoski et al., 2024). In the absence of juvenile criminal legal data related to probation completion in Alberta (Department of Justice Canada, 2021), ICHS's after-school Outreach program completion could provide a preliminary basis for exploring the factors that influence youth probation success in this specific context. However, the low completion rates may be reflective of broader systemic issues. For example, the scarcity of provincially available probation completion data and research points to inconsistent measurement and tracking of youth probation outcomes across jurisdictions, making direct comparisons difficult (Department of Justice Canada, 2020, 2021).

Nationally, data on probation completion rates are often limited or unpublished, complicating efforts to understand trends in youth criminal legal outcomes. However, one study by F.-Dofour and colleagues (2018) reported a probation completion rate of 40%. These findings highlight the need for more consistent data collection to better evaluate the success of community-based programs like probation, particularly for JIYP. Further inquiry should focus on understanding how these variables interact in Alberta's context, specifically for JIYP with structurally marginalized or minoritized identities. This could involve evaluating how tailored interventions – or the lack thereof – impact outcomes, particularly concerning cultural background, gender, and educational engagement, as suggested by the completion trends observed at ICHS (Church et al., 2021; Goldstein et al., 2019; McMickens et al., 2024).

ICHS's Outreach program and participants' completion rates, therefore, could serve as a starting point for broader research into the adequacy of existing interventions aimed at supporting diverse needs. This includes investigating the program's alignment with the recommendations of culturally responsive and youth-centered interventions identified as effective in addressing the complex needs of structurally marginalized groups, especially Indigenous and minoritized youth (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Heo, 2019; Jackson, 2015).

Participant Differences

For the second research question regarding potential differences between those who completed their probation hours and those who did not, several key distinctions emerged based on the six variables explored: (1) self-reported gender; (2) age at initial registration; (3) self-reported cultural background; (4) total credits earned; (5) Outreach hours completed; and (6) charges/crimes committed.

Descriptive findings of the first variable, self-identified gender, revealed that 80% of completers self-identified as female whereas the majority of non-completers self-identified as male (65.2%). This trend raises important questions about the role of gender in probation outcomes and suggests that gender-specific factors may influence the likelihood of completing probation. Existing literature suggests that female youth often face distinct challenges during probation, including higher rates of trauma and caregiving responsibilities, which can influence their engagement with rehabilitative services (Folk et al., 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Parrish et al., 2020). Tailoring interventions to address such gender-specific needs may help support stronger engagement and improve probation outcomes (Lee et al., 2023; Lee & Taxman, 2020). Conversely, the higher proportion of self-identified males among non-completers could suggest that ICHS's program strategies may need to be more targeted or intensive to achieve similar outcomes (Bergquist et al., 2024; Church et al., 2021; Goodwin et al., 2022). Further inquiry into gender-responsive approaches could be beneficial in probation programs, ensuring that both female and male participants receive the support they need to successfully complete probation (Folk et al., 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

The second variable, age at initial registration, showed that 60% of completers were between 14 and 17 years old, while 40% were 18 or 19 years old. Non-completers showed a similar distribution, with 69.6% in the younger age group and 30.4% in the older group. Although age in both groups trended towards similarly, these remain areas where further inquiry could be beneficial. For instance, developmental factors such as improved emotional regulation and decision-making abilities in older youth could potentially enhance their ability to comply with probation conditions (Ashford & Gallagher, 2019; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020). Conversely,

younger participants who are still developing cognitively and emotionally may struggle more with adhering to structured programs and understanding the long-term consequences of their actions (Department of Justice Canada, 2020; McKenna & Anderson, 2024; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020; Xu et al., 2020), spotlighting the need for more tailored interventions for younger youth to help them navigate the probation process successfully (Bergquist et al., 2024; Goodwin et al., 2022; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019). Further research is needed to explore how developmental factors may interact with program engagement.

Regarding the third variable, self-identified cultural background, 80% of completers self-identified as Indigenous, which is reflective of the overall sample where 87.9% of participants identified as Indigenous. This indicates that Indigenous youth were highly represented in both completer and non-completer groups. As ICHS strives to "provide Edmonton's marginalized Indigenous youth and other urban youth, with tools and opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, desperation, and dependence that dominates their lives, enabling them to become contributing members of our community", the majority of participants self-identifying as Indigenous seems to align with their programming framework (ICHS, 2021). Moreover, the high representation of Indigenous youth across the sample stresses the importance of integrating culturally responsive practices into probation programs. Indigenous youth often face unique challenges, including historical and intergenerational trauma, that necessitates culturally informed practices to support their rehabilitation effectively (Church et al., 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). This emphasis on cultural relevance could play a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging and identity, which are essential for supporting the well-being and positive development of Indigenous youths (Church et al., 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024).

The fourth variable, total credits earned, showed that youths who completed their probation hours earned more credits ($M = 21.7$) than non-completers ($M = 13.1$). Educational attainment is often a protective factor against reoffending, with higher levels of academic achievement being linked to better outcomes for justice-involved youth (Crumé et al., 2021; Noorman & Brancale, 2023; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020). Research indicates that educational engagement not only contributes to immediate academic success, but also fosters a sense of purpose and stability which can be integral for youths who are navigating the challenges of probation (Crumé et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021). This points to the potential value of integrating educational components into probation intervention programs to support not only compliance with conditions, but also personal development and future opportunities (Bergquist et al., 2024; Crumé et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2024).

The fifth variable, Outreach hours completed, revealed a negligible difference between completers and non-completers. Non-completers had a slightly higher average number of probation hours ($M = 17.8$) compared to completers ($M = 16.6$). This small gap suggests that Outreach hours alone may not be a key factor in distinguishing completers and non-completers, and other variables – such as engagement with the intervention or individual circumstances – may play a larger role. In addition, it is important to differentiate between assigned hours and completed hours. For non-completers, the higher number of assigned hours may reflect greater probation demands, but this does not necessarily translate into completion. Future research should explore how the interaction between assigned probation hours and actual hours completed impacts probation outcomes, especially considering the role of relational and contextual support systems. Although not directly linked to program outcomes, this highlights the importance of matching program interventions to the specific needs and challenges of each youth (Bonta &

Andrews, 2007; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Vincent et al., 2024). Therefore, although ICHS's after-school Outreach program may offer valuable activities, the difference in probation hours suggests the need for tailored interventions that address the unique challenges faced by youth with more demanding probation conditions (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Goldstein et al., 2019; Lang et al., 2024; NeMoyer et al., 2020).

The sixth and final variable, charges/crimes committed, showed that youths who completed their probation hours seemed to have a lower criminal history, with fewer total crimes/charges committed ($M = 2.1$) compared to non-completers ($M = 4.9$). This gap suggests that crime severity may play a role in determining probation outcomes, as the number of probation hours assigned often corresponds to the severity of a youth's offenses and their probation requirements (Daly et al., 2016; Noorman & Brancale, 2023; Pulis & Sprott, 2005). Those with more severe or frequent intersections with the criminal legal system are likely to face greater challenges in adhering to probation conditions (Basanta et al., 2018; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Kapoor et al., 2018) and may have found it harder to fully engage with the program (Crumé et al., 2021; NeMoyer et al., 2020). Moreover, youths with a more severe criminal history may require more intensive support to manage their probationary conditions (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Youths with higher levels of criminal legal involvement may benefit from interventions that address their specific legal and personal challenges (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). For example, participants with higher levels of legal involvement might require intensive, tailored interventions that address practical barriers, such as unsafe or unstable housing or access to mental health services, which – when not addressed – can hinder a youth's ability to complete their probation (Basanta et al., 2018; Kapoor et al., 2018). Further exploration of individualized or tiered approaches to intervention with youth with complex legal challenges is needed to

ensure programs like ICHS's Outreach are effectively aligned with their needs (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Myers & Farrell, 2008; Public Safety Canada, 2009).

Program and Support Engagement

For the third research question regarding programs and supports these youths engaged with because of participating in ICHS's after-school Outreach program, two overarching program types were explored: (1) Legal Supports (LSs); and (2) Youth Engagement (YE) supports. This was done to identify any trends in the types of accessing these supports by youths.

For the first program type, Legal Supports (LSs), 18 distinct support types were accessed by participants. Among these, assistance with contacting a participant's probation officer was one of the most frequently used supports. This support was accessed by 30 out of 33 participants (90.9%), including 9 completers (90%) and 21 non-completers (91.3%). Similarly, contacting the Edmonton Youth Attendance Centre (EYAC) was another widely accessed support. This support was accessed by 24 participants (72.7%), with 8 completers (80%) and 16 non-completers (69.6%) relying on this support. Court attendance with a participant was also accessed frequently by 23 participants (69.7%), with 16 non-completers (69.6%) and 7 completers (70%). The relational aspect of the LS Worker accompanying participants to court highlights the importance of providing direct support during stressful legal proceedings (Crumé et al., 2021; Department of Justice Canada, 2021). These services bring attention to the foundational role of relational support and basic compliance-related support in the probation process for both completers and non-completers.

Nine of the 18 support types were accessed by fewer participants. Court attendance without a participant (i.e., due to the participant forgetting to attend, or the LS Worker going on a participant's behalf) was accessed by 10 participants (30.3%), with 7 non-completers (30.4%)

and 3 completers (30.0%). Probation extension assistance was accessed by 9 participants (27.3%), with 6 non-completers (26.1%) and 3 completers (30%). Warrant assistance was accessed by 8 participants (24.2%), with 6 non-completers (26.1%) and 2 completers (20%). Contacting the participant's lawyer was utilized by 6 participants (18.2%), with 5 non-completers (21.7%) and 1 completer (10%) accessing this support. Having the LS Worker go with a participant to a police station was accessed by 4 participants (12.1%), with 3 non-completers (13.0%) and 1 completer (10%). Obtaining assistance contacting the courthouse was accessed by 3 participants (9.1%), with 2 non-completers (8.7%) and 1 completer (10%). Only one support was accessed exclusively by completers, which was assistance with contacting the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP; $n = 1$, 10%). These types of assistance suggest that some youth required more hands-on legal support approaches to navigate their probation terms, possibly due to experiencing increased barriers (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Pappas & Dent, 2021; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020). However, these do not necessarily indicate whether these youths were more likely to succeed in completing probation. Research suggests that certain legal supports – such as contacting probation officers or attending court – are important for maintaining compliance with legal obligations, especially for youth facing systemic barriers like disorganization or disengagement (Goldstein et al., 2019; NeMoyer et al., 2020). More individualized support (e.g., warrant assistance or probation extensions) could reflect higher levels of need, such as learning disabilities or chronic absenteeism (Crumé et al., 2021; Daly et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2021; Mueller & Stoddard, 2006), and may be used by youth who face additional obstacles in complying with their probation requirements.

More intensive legal support was predominantly accessed by non-completers. For instance, contacting Legal Aid was utilized by 7 participants (21.2%), with 6 non-completers

(26.1%) and 1 completer (10%). Similarly, contacting the Crown Prosecutor was accessed by 10 participants (30.3%), with 8 non-completers (34.8%) and 2 completers (20%) utilizing this support. Certain supports were exclusively accessed by non-completers, such as contacting duty counsel ($n = 3$, 13%), contacting a custodial participant ($n = 3$, 13%), providing a legal support letter for use in court ($n = 3$, 13%), obtaining fingerprinting assistance ($n = 1$, 4.3%), contacting a police officer ($n = 1$, 4.3%), and being brought to the Edmonton Remand Centre ($n = 1$, 4.3%). This trend implies that non-completers may have been experiencing greater legal challenges, in addition to facing additional barriers in navigating the legal system despite the support provided by ICHS's LS Worker. This may reflect the higher risk profiles of non-completers, which suggests that they may require more intensive interventions (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Moreover, these findings further suggest that those who are better supported in educational and community contexts may require less formal legal intervention (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Church et al., 2021; McMickens et al., 2024).

For the second and final program type, Youth Engagement (YE) supports, 17 distinct support types were accessed by participants. Transportation support was the most frequently used support, accessed by 28 participants (84.6%), with 20 non-completers (87%) and 8 completers (80%). This included providing participants with rides to and from school or appointments and offering bus tickets, placing emphasis on the need for reliable transportation in maintaining engagement with probation-related activities. The importance of reliable transportation for maintaining engagement with probation-related activities, such as attending appointments and accessing other necessary services, seemed important for both groups. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the need for logistical support that addresses foundational barriers to engagement (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; NeMoyer et al., 2020).

Housing support was accessed by 25 participants (75.8%), with 18 non-completers (78.3%) and 7 completers (70%). This service involved referrals to shelters and transitional housing assistance. Research highlights that structural barriers such as unsafe and unstable housing can limit a structurally marginalized youth's ability to engage with probation programs (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022), pointing to the importance of addressing basic needs as part of holistic interventions for JIYP.

Mental health support, addiction support, and medical support were also highly utilized, each accessed by 23 participants (69.7%). Mental health support included 14 non-completers (60.9%) and 9 completers (90%), calling attention to the gravity of addressing psychological difficulties as part of probation programs (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Folk et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2013). The provision of trauma-informed care and accessible mental health services may contribute to higher rates of probation completion among those who engage with these supports, as such interventions are integral for mitigating trauma impacts and fostering resilience (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Mental health services and support can be vital, as underlying psychological difficulties can hinder compliance with probation conditions (Lee & Taxman, 2020; McMickens et al., 2024; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019). Addictions support was accessed by 17 non-completers (73.9%) and 6 completers (60%), reflecting the dire need for targeted interventions that address substance use-related challenges. Unmet needs in areas like addictions are serious barriers to successful probation completion, as they can exacerbate the difficulties justice-involved youth face in adhering to probation requirements (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Nelson et al., 2024). Medical support was accessed by 16 non-completers (69.6%) and 7 completers (70%). The need for targeted interventions becomes apparent as JIYP often face overlapping barriers related to unsafe

and unstable housing, mental health challenges, and substance use (Basanta et al., 2018; Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Finseth et al., 2022; Kapoor et al., 2018).

Cultural support and financial support were each accessed by 22 participants (66.7%). Cultural support, which included activities such as smudging, attending sweats, and creating cultural items, was accessed by 14 non-completers (60.9%) and 8 completers (80%). Programs that understand and integrate the cultural contexts of Indigenous youth are important for building trust and engagement, addressing specific needs related to historical and colonialist trauma and ongoing systemic challenges (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; NeMoyer et al., 2020). Accessing cultural support may have helped to foster a sense of identity and belongingness among participants, which can reinforce cultural identity and community ties to increase rates of probation completion (McKenna & Anderson, 2024; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Financial support, which included assistance with applying for student financing and opening bank accounts, was accessed by 16 non-completers (69.6%) and 6 completers (60%). Child and Family Services (CFS) support, which included liaising with CFS and advocating for participants, was accessed by 21 participants (63.6%), with 15 non-completers (65.2%) and 6 completers (60%) receiving this assistance. This level of access highlights the involvement of CFS in addressing participants' broader familial needs. Attendance support, which involved YE Staff members calling participants or their guardian(s) to encourage school attendance, was accessed by 19 participants (57.6%), with 12 non-completers (52.2%) and 7 completers (70%).

Suicide intervention and parenting/pregnancy support were each accessed by 13 participants (39.4%). Suicide intervention, which included creating and revisiting a participant's safety plan, was accessed by 9 non-completers (39.1%) and 4 completers (40%).

Parenting/pregnancy support involved providing participants with pregnancy tests, attending

ICHS's parenting classes, providing support during pregnancy loss, referring participants to

Edmonton's Health for Two program, and referring participants to Edmonton's Terra Centre.

This support was utilized by 8 non-completers (34.8%) and 5 completers (50%). The use of

parenting and pregnancy supports suggests that addressing the caregiving responsibilities of

JIYP can be essential, as evidence highlights the importance of family-oriented interventions in

helping youth meet their probation requirements (Mueller & Stoddard, 2006; Mueller et al.,

2023; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019).

Identification support, which included help in obtaining government-issued identification,

was accessed by 14 participants (42.4%), with 10 non-completers (43.5%) and 4 completers

(40%). Employment support and legal support (i.e., related to child custody or victim's services)

were each accessed by 11 participants (33.3%). Employment support was used by 6 non-

completers (26.1%) and 5 completers (50%), with this trend spotlighting the central role that

practical life skills can play in promoting successful probation completion (Klymkiw et al.,

2024). Employment support can provide JIYP with essential skills and opportunities that

contribute to a sense of purpose and stability, which are important for probation condition

compliance and successful reintegration (Drawbridge et al., 2019; Klymkiw et al, 2024). Legal

support was accessed by 7 non-completers (30.4%) and 4 completers (40%). Foodbank support,

which involved participants accessing ICHS's in-house foodbank, was accessed by 10

participants (30.3%), with 7 non-completers (30.4%) and 3 completers (30%) benefiting from

food assistance. Clothing support, which involved participants taking home donated and cleaned

clothing from ICHS, was accessed by 5 participants (15.2%), with 4 non-completers (17.4%) and

1 completer (10%) receiving assistance with clothing needs. Personal hygiene support was

accessed exclusively by non-completers ($n = 5$, 21.7%), indicating that these participants may have required more foundational assistance.

These findings highlight that, although certain services such as transportation and housing were vital for all participants, other supports like mental health and cultural support were accessed more frequently by completers. On the other hand, non-completers relied more heavily on addiction, housing, and financial support, which may indicate more profound systemic challenges (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020). The range and diversity of support accessed in the current study raise important questions for further investigation. Specifically, future research should explore how tailoring supports to the unique needs of JIYP could contribute to improved outcomes. Understanding how specific types of supports, such as cultural or financial assistance, align with individual needs may help to inform program design and enhance probation success for both completers and non-completers.

Implications

The findings from this study highlight the diverse and complex needs of JIYP. Youth in this group often face overlapping barriers related to unsafe and unstable housing (Kapoor et al., 2018; Klymkiw et al., 2024), mental health challenges (Folk et al., 2021; Poyraz Findik et al., 2019), addictions (Folk et al., 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; NeMoyer et al., 2020), and systemic challenges (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Noorman & Brancale, 2023). Programs designed to support these youths should adopt a comprehensive approach, addressing both their basic and psychological needs, while fostering positive growth and healthy outcomes. The current study offers exploratory insights into the types of services accessed by both completers and non-completers, which helps in characterizing the range of needs among JIYP. Understanding these groups is important when considering how

programs can be further tailored to meet their specific needs, and prompts questions about whether services should be tailored or streamed to match specific needs (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Lee & Taxman, 2020; Logan-Greene et al., 2020).

Given the diversity of needs among these youths, tailoring interventions to meet the unique needs of each group is essential. The observed trends in supports accessed by completers and non-completers highlight the range of challenges JIYP face. While completers were more likely to engage with mental health and cultural support, non-completers relied more on addiction, housing, and financial assistance. This highlights the importance of considering individual needs in the design and implementation of programs, as unmet needs can exacerbate challenges in complying with probation conditions (Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; McMickens et al., 2024). Furthermore, this raises important questions about how individualized interventions might better serve both groups, and whether more tailored or targeted approaches could improve probation outcomes (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Lee et al., 2023). Future research should explore how tailored interventions that are aimed at addressing these foundational issues might impact probation completion rates and long-term outcomes.

ICHS's after-school Outreach program seeks to employ a relational approach that fosters personal growth, trust, and engagement through positive interactions between participants and staff. Additionally, culturally responsive and trauma-informed approaches can be vital for fostering engagement, particularly among Indigenous youth and other minoritized groups, who may experience unique challenges related to systemic and historical trauma (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Programs that integrate cultural contexts within a relational framework have been shown to be effective in supporting these youth populations (Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Zelechoski et al.,

2024). Although the specific impacts of these relationships were not directly measured in the current study, relational factors – such as emotional support or mentoring – may play an important role in facilitating youth engagement (Zelechoski et al., 2024). Further research is needed to directly explore whether it is the services provided or the quality of relationships with staff that facilitates youth participation and ongoing involvement (Klymkiw et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Although the ICHS program endeavours to balance both risk reduction and positive development via a relational approach, these findings remain exploratory, and more investigation is needed to unpack the mechanisms by which programming supports youth engagement and improves outcomes. Next steps could include exploring how relational factors mediate the effects of services provided.

ICHS's commitment to ongoing evaluation and improvement through data collection reflects the program's efforts to refine its interventions. Furthermore, improved data collection is needed to better understand the specific mechanisms at play, and to determine whether individual characteristics (e.g., legal complexity, offense severity, engagement with services, etc.) are associated with different program outcomes (Li et al., 2022; Muir & Viljoen, 2022; Zelechoski et al., 2024). To improve usability and reliability of data, suggestions include standardizing data entry, integrating a section within LS forms to log specific Outreach activities, and using multiple data collectors or digital tools for real-time engagement tracking. These steps could reduce bias, increase data accuracy, and provide clearer insights into which services these youths are accessing. Moreover, standardized protocols and structured feedback from both staff and participants could further enrich the data collected, providing deeper knowledge into program effectiveness and help to tailor interventions.

Additionally, while the current study highlights the need for resources to support the development of community-based programs that provide comprehensive, relationally informed care, the findings are exploratory and do not provide definitive conclusions. Further research is needed to explore how evidence-informed practice, ongoing data collection, and trauma-informed programming can be refined to meet the evolving and multifaceted needs of JIYP (Kapoor et al., 2018; Zelechoski et al., 2024). Programs such as ICHS's Outreach could serve as a model for further exploration, providing opportunities to study how relational approaches and trauma-informed wraparound services might be scaled and refined in diverse contexts (Folk et al., 2021; Klymkiw et al., 2024; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Muir & Viljoen, 2022).

Limitations

Although this study provides valuable preliminary and exploratory insights, it is not without limitations. The sample primarily consisted of Indigenous youths, which reflects broader trends observed within the youth criminal legal system where Indigenous youth are disproportionately represented; for example, although Indigenous youth made up approximately 8% of Alberta's youth population in 2020, they accounted for 50% of youth admissions to custody during the 2020-2021 fiscal period (Statistics Canada, 2021). This overrepresentation is deeply rooted in Canada's colonial history and the structural marginalization Indigenous peoples have endured for generations. For over a century, policies such as those enforced in residential schools were designed to strip away Indigenous culture and identity through systemic assimilation, a practice now recognized as cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). These harmful practices have left deep, enduring scars on Indigenous communities, including intergenerational trauma, disrupted family systems, and ongoing discrimination in the criminal legal and child welfare systems. These challenges

contribute to the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the criminal legal system, which highlights the continuing effects of colonialism in present-day Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). At the same time, Indigenous youth often face multiple intersecting forms of marginalization. Factors like race, socioeconomic status, and historical trauma overlap to create even more complex barriers to justice and well-being (Heo, 2019; Jackson, 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This intersectionality makes it even more urgent to consider how systems, including the criminal legal system, can better respond to their unique and overlapping needs.

During the September 2014 to August 2017 period which ICHS's data was explored, approximately 65% to 73% of their student population self-identified as Indigenous. Although ICHS had a high number of Indigenous youths enrolled, their programming has been developed in a way for these youths to exist within a system that historically has not supported them (e.g., educationally, legally, etc.); in other words, ICHS's programming has more practical implications due to societal overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in criminal legal systems, which is reflective of national efforts towards reconciliation (Department of Justice Canada, 2021; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Additionally, the sample size was relatively small, the study was limited to participants from a single program, and the study did not utilize a longitudinal design. Furthermore, the study utilized a descriptive analysis and exploratory approach to focus on describing ICHS's after-school Outreach program and its participants (i.e., completers and non-completers). As such, the study was not designed to establish causality or to observe changes in outcomes over time and results cannot be generalized.

Some data, such as cultural support or mental health support, may have relied on self-reported measures when logged by ICHS's staff members, which can introduce bias. Staff members may have over- or under-reported participants' engagement due to recall limitations or time constraints, which could impact the accuracy of the findings. Additionally, data capturing procedures that were restricted to one individual (i.e., LS Worker) may have impacted the quality and quantity of logged information. Additionally, data collection was limited by the lack of systematically collected data regarding the activities participants engaged in during the after-school Outreach program, which further limits the study's ability to comprehensively describe which aspects of the program were utilized by participants. Furthermore, variability in how the program was delivered or differences in the level of staff support during activities could have influenced how the program was experienced by participants. Without detailed records of participant activities, this study is unable to explore how engagement with specific Outreach program components may relate to overall participation.

Finally, although this study considered the number of charges/crimes committed, it did not explore other legal variables, such as offense severity, probation length, or recidivism (i.e., reoffending rates during or after program participation). A more detailed exploration of legal factors could provide greater understanding of how the program interfaces with legal involvement and behavioural outcomes for youth. Understanding patterns in recidivism could also offer insights into the effectiveness of legal interventions in reducing reoffending and addressing the complex legal needs of JIYP. Future studies should consider integrating these legal variables to evaluate how participation in programs like ICHS's Outreach may relate to long-term legal and behavioural trajectories for JIYP, particularly in terms of recidivism and probation requirement compliance.

Future Directions

ICHS's after-school Outreach program provides an example of a community-based, relationally informed interventions to improve probation outcomes for JIYP. Through individualized and supportive approaches, the program aims to meet the complex needs of structurally marginalized youths intersecting with the criminal legal system. Although this study helps to characterize the program and its participants, further research is needed to explore how such interventions might contribute to holistic, humanizing services, as called for in the current literature (Balsamo & Poncin, 2016; Fountain & Mahmoudi, 2021; Logan-Greene et al., 2020; Schwalbe & Koetzle, 2020).

Future studies should aim to include larger, more diverse samples and consider the longer-term impacts of community-based interventions on probation outcomes. The study's descriptive analysis of key variables – such as self-identified gender, age, self-identified cultural background, credits earned, Outreach hours completed, and charges/crimes committed – stresses the need for future inquiry into how these factors interact and influence probation completion. Understanding these dynamics could lead to refining intervention strategies to better meet the needs of diverse youth populations. Additionally, future research could investigate how specific elements of YE supports and LSs contribute to probation-related outcomes. Identifying which aspects of these supports are most effective would offer insights into how programs can be better tailored to address both individual needs and broader systemic challenges. This deeper exploration could garner valuable knowledge about which support mechanisms are most impactful, laying the groundwork for more tailored interventions to meet youths' unique needs.

Given the reliance on self-reported data and the potential biases introduced by this method, future research should consider incorporating more objective measures of engagement

and program participation. Improving data capturing practices – whether through multiple data collectors or the use of standardized protocols – could enhance the reliability of the findings and reduce potential bias. Strengthening data collection methods would allow for more accurate and robust analyses of how youth engage with the support provided (Chatfield, 2020).

Longitudinal studies are particularly important for tracking changes in behaviour and outcomes over time. Such research could help determine whether the observed patterns in this study are sustained and could establish whether programs like ICHS's after-school Outreach contribute to long-term outcomes, such as probation completion or reduced legal involvement. Further investigation is needed to identify which specific elements of the program are most effective in supporting compliance with probation requirements, as well as how these interventions address both individual and systemic factors affecting JIYP (Klymkiw et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the diverse needs of JIYP and the wide range of supports accessed through ICHS's after-school Outreach program. By characterizing the types of services and supports accessed by both completers and non-completers, the study provides a foundation for understanding the complexity of needs among JIYP, particularly in areas such as housing, addiction, and legal support. These findings highlight the importance of further exploration into how community-based programs can be refined to better serve youth with diverse and intersecting challenges. While the study did not evaluate outcomes, it reveals the broad range of programming accessed by participants and the ongoing need for tailored interventions that meet the unique needs of these youth. Moving forward, future research can build on this foundation by examining how specific program components interact with individual characteristics to influence youth engagement, probation completion, and long-term success. This study contributes to the

broader understanding of how relationally informed, community-based interventions may play a role in addressing the complex needs of JIYP. As the field continues to advocate for more holistic, rehabilitative strategies, this study helps lay the groundwork for future research aimed at supporting youth reintegration and promoting healthier long-term outcomes.

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Appendix A

Notification of Approval

Date: August 11, 2023

Study ID: Pro00133481

Principal Investigator: Kathleen Holmstrom

Study Supervisor: Jacqueline Pei

Study Title: Community-Based Intervention Program for Justice-Involved Youth on Probation: A Secondary Descriptive Analysis

Approval Expiry Date: August 9, 2024

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 2. Your application has been reviewed on behalf of the committee.

Approved Documents:

Consent Forms: Student Consent Form

Protocol/Research Proposal: Information Analysis Outline

Other Documents: Non-Identifiable Variables List

Any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to the REB for approval prior to implementation. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the REB does not constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, community organizations, school boards) are obtained, before this research begins.

Sincerely,

Ubaka Ogbogu, LLB, BL, LLM, SJD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 2

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix B

Notification of Approval (Renewal)

Date: Monday, July 29, 2024

Renewal ID: Pro00133481_REN1

Principal Investigator: Kathleen Holmstrom

Study ID: Pro00133481

Study Title: Community-Based Intervention Program for Justice-Involved Youth on Probation: A Secondary Descriptive Analysis

Study Supervisor: Jacqueline Pei

Approval Expiry Date: Monday, July 28, 2025

Thank you for submitting this renewal application. Your application has been reviewed and approved.

This re-approval is valid for one year. If your study continues past the expiration date as noted above, you will be required to complete another renewal request. Beginning at 30 days prior to the expiration date, you will receive notices that the study is about to expire. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the REB does not constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g. universities/colleges, community organizations, school boards) are obtained, before the research begins.

Sincerely,

Claire Trottier, REB Specialist, on behalf of

Ubaka Ogbogu, LLB, BL, LLM, SJD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 2

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).