



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# YOUTH RECOVERY COMMUNITIES

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Purpose  
History  
Data

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The YRC Theory of Change  
How YRC Programs Put their Principles into  
Action

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## PURPOSE

- To equip young people to thrive in their youth, minimize their substance use and mental health challenges and follow their chosen path to wellness



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## History of the YRCs

### Why Youth Recovery Communities?

- Scarcity of peer services to support young people's recovery processes
- Understanding of the powerful role of peers during this developmental period

#### Primary Referral Sources

schools  
treatment providers  
juvenile justice

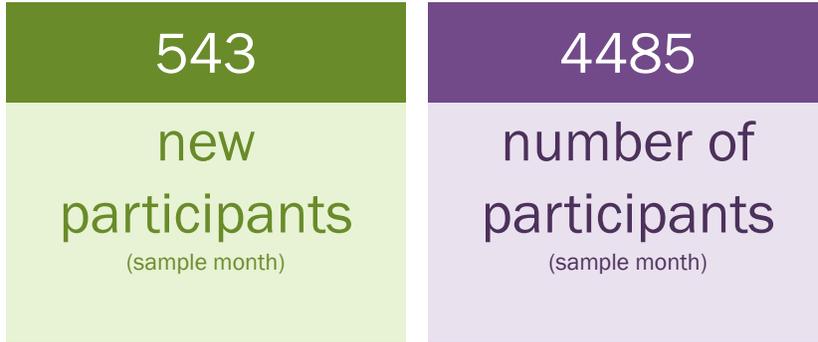
#### First Cohort

8 programs  
funded in 2016  
as a pilot project

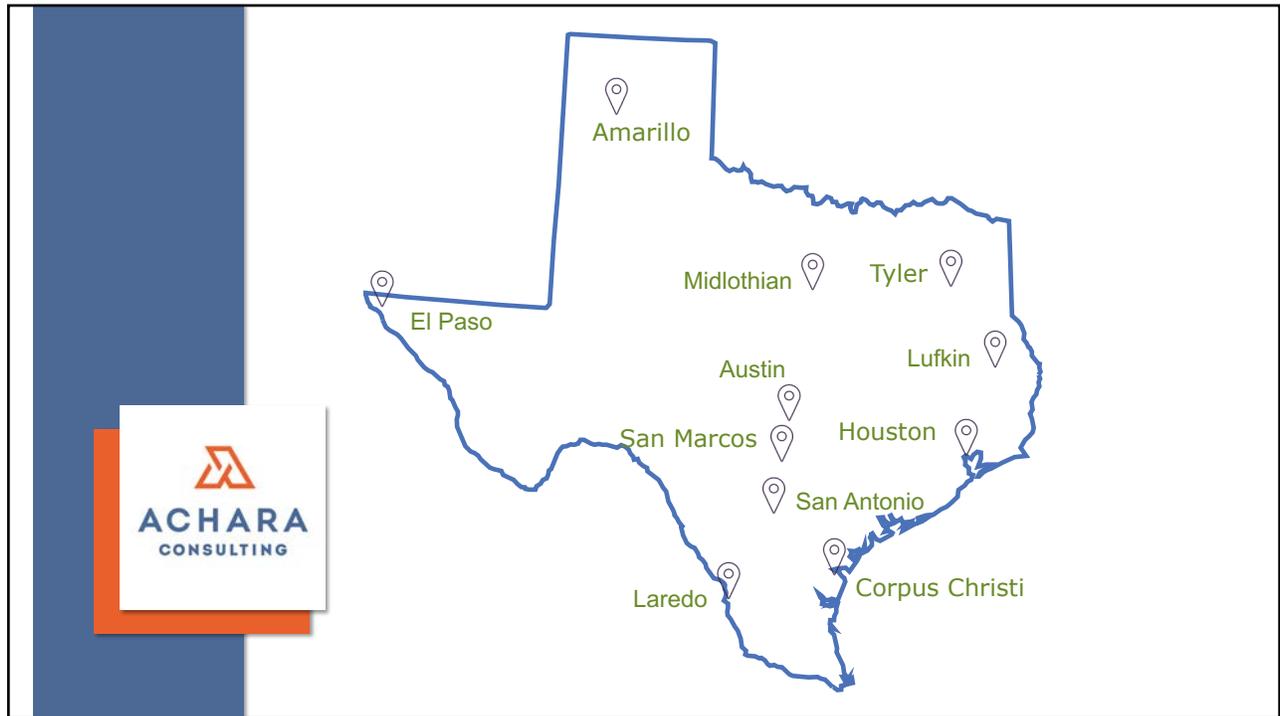


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The YRC model was intentionally not overly directive so that the model could evolve naturally and be informed by the youth and families.



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## YRC programs provide values-driven services

### YRCs...

- are youth-driven: each YRC is different
- promote multiple pathways to recovery (including harm reduction)
- focus on building resilience rather than addressing deficits
- leverage the lived experience of youth peer leaders
- are fun and engaging
- influence behaviors through authentic relationships vs. rules
- Support young people's right to make decisions and learn from the results
- meet youth and families exactly where they are
- engage the youth's circle of support
- always regard young people as more than their substance use and/or mental health challenges



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### A YRC does not...

- Function as just a drop-in center
- Provide treatment
- Conduct drug testing
- Make services mandatory
- Discharge young people for using a substance



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## YRC Theory of Change

The more a YRC program **reduces risk factors and increases protective factors**, the more it is likely to succeed in **preventing new or reducing existing substance abuse** and/or mental health challenges among children and youth.



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## Type of Social Support and Associated Peer Recovery Support Services in YRC

Type of Support	Description	Support Service Examples
Emotional	Demonstrate empathy, caring, or concern to bolster person's self-esteem and confidence.	Peer mentoring Peer-led support groups
Informational	Share knowledge and information and/or provide life or vocational skills training.	Parenting class Job readiness training Wellness seminar
Instrumental	Provide concrete assistance to help others accomplish tasks.	Child care Transportation Help accessing community health and social services
Affiliational	Facilitate contacts with other people to promote learning of social and recreational skills, create community, and acquire a sense of belonging.	Recovery centers Sports league participation Alcohol- and drug-free socialization opportunities



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## How YRCs Put their Principles Into Action

1. Create safe, nurturing environments
2. Promote a sense of connection and belonging
3. Support young people in learning to have fun without the use of substances and those with mental health challenges to continue their path to wellness and recovery
4. Strengthen young people's developmental assets/protective factors and resilience
5. Promote leadership and autonomy
6. Enhance young people's critical thinking skills
7. Address the holistic needs of youth
8. Engage young people all the entire continuum of wellness
9. Strengthen parenting



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## 1. Create safe, nurturing environments

- Create welcoming environments that naturally attract young people
- Model warm, respectful language and behavior
- Continually affirm young people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- Provide what youth want (e.g., food, a place to relax, a quiet space to think or do homework)
- Set clear expectations upfront with youth, parents, and referral sources; for example, don't establish a predetermined length of time in the program as an alternative for involvement with the juvenile justice system

Example: Each YRC has a activity center in the adolescents community



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## 2. Promote a sense of connection and belonging

- Provide opportunities for 1:1 connection
- Peer leaders use their lived experience to connect, engage, and inspire
- All are welcome - multiple pathways to recovery
- Peer support for parents
- Offer peer-run groups in schools, neighborhoods and YRC centers

Ex: YRC staff provide connection and stability through family crises and the Parents have a Parent Peer



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## 3. Support young people in learning to have fun without the use of substances and to help the progress of those with mental health challenges:

- Intentionally create a fun, informal, non-threatening culture
- Integrate recreational activities as a part of programming (fishing, bowling, games, whatever the youth desire)
- Engage youth in community settings, like schools, parks, rec centers

Example: YRC hosts day trips, hiking, laser tag, amusement parks, nature adventures, etc.



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## 4. Strengthen young people's developmental assets and resilience

- Peer Leaders promote protective factors for youth
- Approach their work with intentionality.
- Aim to gain an understanding of each person's developmental assets by exploring their social connections, sense of identity, experiences in school, use of free time, and experiences



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## 5. Promote leadership and autonomy

- Ask young people for their thoughts, preferences, and desires for YRC services and activities
- Develop a peer leadership council that gives young people an opportunity to practice leadership and decision-making skills
- Encourage young people to practice leadership skills such as helping to plan and coordinate recreational activities
- Create opportunities for youth to provide peer-to-peer support and guidance
- Talk with youth about real-world challenges that they encounter, help them think through options and identify the pros and cons of various choices
- Celebrate milestones and successes—small and large

Example: Leadership Camp



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## 6. Enhance young people's critical thinking skills



- Help youth identify their “why”; what are their reasons for making choices that support their wellness? What motivates them? Where do they want to be?
- Support young people in creating a vision for their lives
- With permission, refer to youth's real-life experiences to build decision-making skills

Example: YRCs use role plays, improvisation, talent shows and other creative approaches to build planning, decision-making and coping skills



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## 7. Address the holistic needs and desires of youth and families

- Intentionally learn about who they are and what's important to them (beyond recovery)
- Help young people envision the life they want for themselves
- Support youth in taking small steps toward a direction they choose
- The needs and desires of the parents are viewed as equally important
- Provide resources and supports that are relevant and helpful for youth and families, such as tutoring

Ex. YRC delivered school lunches, hot meals, food to take home during COVID  
Some YRC's created a personalized food pantry  
YRC staff are trained in suicide prevention



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**8. Engage young people across the continuum of wellness**

- Offer prevention and health promotion services, not only services that address the needs of youth with an identified mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Partner with treatment providers
- Expand referral sources beyond treatment programs to include nontraditional community resources to promote early identification.
- Example: Collaborating :pantries, social service support agencies, child welfare

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**Strengthen Parenting**

- Each YRC has a parent liaison-leader
- Provide parents with support to meet real time basic needs
- Provide support groups for parents
- Facilitate parent- parent connections and support
- Offer education groups for parents

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## Sample Menu of Services

- Individual support
- Groups led by peer leaders
- Groups led by youth
- Recreational activities
- Tutoring
- Family education
- Family support groups
- Planning
- Assertive connections to community resources needed by the youth or family
- Employment readiness
- Employment/internship placement
- Liaison and advocacy with school administrators
- Liaison and advocacy with juvenile justice
- Safe, structured space for remote learning (COVID implications)
- Community service events
- Resource/activity center

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## Youth Recovery Communities (Y.R.C.)

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Deep East Texas  
Lufkin | 936-634-5753

Aliviane, Inc. | El Paso  
915-782-4000

Austin Recovery, Inc. | Austin  
512-697-8500

Cenikor Foundation (Region 1) | Amarillo  
888-236-4567

Cenikor Foundation (Region 4) | Tyler  
903-630-7461

Cenikor Foundation (Region 7) | San Marcos  
888-236-4567

The Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Costal Bend | Corpus Christi  
361-884-2272

Reach | Midlothian  
972-723-1053

Rise Recovery | San Antonio  
210-227-2634

Serving Children and Adults in Need, Inc. | Laredo  
956-724-3177

Unlimited Visions Aftercare, Inc | Houston  
713-923-1786

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