

Summary

Introduction

In addition to creating a new welfare program in California—the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program—the Welfare-to-Work Act of 1997 also created another new state program: the Comprehensive Youth Services Act (CYSA), which was enacted in fiscal year (FY) 1997/1998 to fund juvenile probation services. The CYSA had three basic goals: (1) keep probation youths from further crime, (2) help probation and at-risk youths develop essential skills to avoid dependence on public assistance (Section 18220(j) WIC, or Welfare Institutional Code), and (3) help achieve four overarching Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF) goals: (a) provide assistance to families so youths may be cared for in their homes; (b) reduce dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (c) encourage formation/maintenance of two-parent families; and (d) prevent/reduce incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Although there was no legal mandate for CYSA to be evaluated, the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) desired a statewide analysis of implementation and outcomes. Through a competitive bidding process, RAND was awarded the contract by CPOC to conduct an independent evaluation of probation's implementation of CYSA/TANF. The evaluation had four objectives: (1) provide timely feedback to CPOC on CYSA/TANF implementation, (2) document how county probation departments (CPDs) have used CYSA/TANF funds, (3) assess impact of local interventions, and (4) draw lessons for improving overall program design and operation.

The evaluation met these objectives through an approach that combined a statewide implementation survey fielded to all 58 counties in Year 1 (and a follow-up survey in Year 3) that sought to describe the CYSA/TANF program implementation and how it varied statewide; an 11-county process study in Year 1 (and a follow-up survey in Year 2) that looked in more depth at implementation across 11 representative focus counties; an outcomes/impact analysis that focused on system-level impacts and individual-level impacts, the latter being done through an evaluation of four programs in four counties; and a funding/claim submission analysis that describes the funding environment into which CYSA/TANF was introduced as well as how counties maximized the use of CYSA/TANF funds.

The evaluation sought to answer five questions: (1) What programs were implemented?; (2) What CYSA/TANF services were provided?; (3) What CYSA/TANF services and programs were being provided in the juvenile halls and camps/ranches?; (4) What was the impact of CYSA/TANF at the individual and system level?; and (5) What was the CYSA/TANF funding environment and what were county claiming experiences?

What Programs Were Implemented?

Overall, counties used CYSA/TANF to fund programs in custody settings (i.e., institutions such as juvenile hall and/or ranches and camps) or spread their CYSA/TANF allocation across programs in multiple categories (from prevention and early intervention to supervision to custody) in order to “provide a continuum of family-focused, case-specific services in a community-based setting, that addresses the full spectrum of child and family needs, including services provided in county-operated residential care facilities.”¹ Early on, counties used CYSA/TANF in their first key programs to focus on more serious youths (602 WIC), with half of counties addressing the needs of both youths and their families in their first key program. In subsequent programs, counties tended to spread their CYSA/TANF funds across several target populations, including habitual truants and runaways (601 WIC), community youths, and their families. In the latter years of CYSA/TANF, counties continued to concentrate on programs for youths and families throughout the continuum of options, with programs delivered in custody settings still being important.

Program details from the 11 counties that participated in the in-depth process study illustrated the different approaches CPDs took to implement CYSA/TANF. For example, programs ranged from establishing a prevention network or voucher program to expanding comprehensive therapeutic day treatment programs to providing counseling, monitoring, and treatment services and a range of life skills development services to youths in custody. Some counties opted to use all their CYSA/TANF allocation to fund a single program or to fund several different programs along the continuum of options.

In 2002, programs serving at-risk youths and their families served the largest number of clients. Approximately 6,400 at-risk youths and 4,600 families were served by these programs. In addition, approximately 8,500 youths were being served in custody programs.

The fact that the CYSA/TANF program came along in the context of a number of ongoing efforts by counties to develop local action plans to provide comprehensive services to youths helped to facilitate its implementation. This allowed CYSA/TANF to build on existing interagency planning bodies. In addition, countywide approaches for addressing the needs of youths and their families and collaborative working relationships between different county agencies and service providers around this issue already had begun to be developed.

Counties made a number of organizational changes to facilitate the implementation of CYSA/TANF, including hiring new probation (or administrative) staff or retraining staff to focus on CYSA/TANF programs, changing operational policies or procedures to meet CYSA-related goals, modifying or changing tracking and/or case management systems, and developing new claiming mechanisms.

Early planning and program implementation were hindered by several key factors, including difficulties associated with trying to implement a multiservice delivery model, claiming procedures and other documentation requirements, lack of detailed guidance from Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) on CYSA implementation, the vagueness of the CYSA legislation’s definitions and guidance on allowable

¹Chapter 3.2 Comprehensive Youth Services Act, 18220(i), 1997; PRWORA.

use of monies, and the challenges of contracting with local service providers. In particular, smaller counties found CYSA/TANF a challenge to implement, given that their allocations were not large enough to do much programming with and given complicated claiming procedures.

About half the counties outsourced their CYSA/TANF programs and services. Of those CPDs that outsourced, two-thirds contracted with a combination of local service providers (e.g., nonprofit organizations) and other county agencies. In particular, formal treatment services, such as mental health assessment and counseling, were outsourced, as were life skills development services (e.g., social responsibility training, parenting skills development). Factors that influenced the decision to outsource included the greater flexibility outsourcing provided CPDs in determining what programs and services could be provided to this population, prior working relationships with local service providers and other county agencies, and the assessment that outsourcing would be more cost-effective than providing the services in-house. Despite early concerns with contracting out services, overall CPDs were moderately satisfied with the quality and range of CYSA/TANF services provided by local providers.

What CYSA/TANF Services Were Provided?

We found that counties, in general, had a number of initial services already in-place prior to CYSA/TANF, given efforts statewide beginning before CYSA/TANF to enhance the delivery of services to youths through such projects as California Board of Corrections' Challenge Initiative. In this context, CYSA/TANF was used by a number of CPDs to build up their portfolios with respect to the depth and type of services being provided to juveniles and their families. Some counties also used CYSA/TANF to retain existing services that were in danger of losing funding or to add back services that had been cut or substantially reduced because of the loss of Title IV-A-EA funding or other fiscal pressures within the county.

Most counties had some form of formal treatment services pre-CYSA/TANF and used their CYSA/TANF allocation to substantially modify or enhance formal treatment services they already had in-place. In general, large counties (who received about 82 percent of the total CYSA/TANF services allocation) were more likely to use CYSA/TANF funds to substantially modify or enhance existing formal treatment services, whereas small counties, which had fewer services to begin with, were more likely to add new treatment services under CYSA/TANF.

In terms of coordination services, most counties had some form of these services, such as externally-provided case management services, pre-CYSA/TANF. Two-thirds of counties used CYSA/TANF to enhance their external case management activities and half enhanced referral and information services about the availability of community resources. Large counties in general were more likely than other counties to enhance existing coordination services across the board, whereas small counties were more likely to use their CYSA/TANF allocation to add external case management and referral services.

Unlike the other service categories, there was greater variation in the percentage of counties that had some form of life skills development services pre-CYSA/TANF. For example, 75 percent of counties had anger management and educational advocacy services already in-place, whereas only 30 percent of counties had parent peer support services. Counties were more likely to use their CYSA/TANF

allocation to add various life skills development services than was the case for other service categories. In general, small counties were more likely than other counties to add new life skills development services, whereas large counties used their CYSA/TANF allocation to enhance a number of these services.

Finally, we found that about 20 percent of counties used their CYSA/TANF allocation to newly add after-care services and 40 percent to enhance existing after-care services. As was true for the previous service categories, large counties were more likely to use their allocation to enhance existing services across the board in the “other services” category (such as after-care, home detention, respite care, or emergency shelter), whereas small counties tended to add just after-care services.

In Year 3, we focused on gaining a more global perspective about the impact of these funds on the 23 CYSA/TANF services. We found that in the latter years of the CYSA/TANF program, counties included a large number of the 23 CYSA/TANF eligible services in their primary program. For example, 11 of the 23 services were provided in more than 75 percent of the counties reporting on their key CYSA/TANF program. Across many of the services, more than a third of counties also reported that they were able to retain a service with their CYSA/TANF dollars.

We expected to find that the types of services and the intensity of services provided in different settings along the continuum of options would vary. Looking across all counties, we found that programs at the higher end of the continuum of options provided more services than did programs for at-risk youths and youths referred for a 602 WIC offense. That is, on average, programs that address at-risk and referred to 602 WIC youths provided on average 12 of the 23 CYSA/TANF services; programs that focused on wards of the court or youths in custody provided on average 15 of the 23 CYSA/TANF services. At-risk programs generally focused less on life skills development services than did programs higher on the continuum. Involvement of the family through such services as family crisis intervention, family mentoring, and family peer support were highest among wardship programs. Formal treatment services (with the exception of day treatment) were provided by the vast majority of the programs, regardless of what part of the continuum of options they focused on.

What CYSA/TANF Services and Programs Were Being Provided in the Juvenile Halls and Camps/Ranches?

In terms of capacity, we found that the 11 counties served varying numbers of youths in juvenile halls, ranging from a low of 26 in one county to more than 1,500 in one of the largest counties. More than half the counties operated one or more juvenile hall with capacities exceeding 200 youths at any one time. For the most part, youths spent relatively short periods of time in juvenile halls during their pre-adjudication phase. Very few of the 11 counties reported lengths of stay exceeding three weeks, with the average length of stay for pre-adjudicated youths ranging from under 5 days to 27 days. With relatively short lengths of stay, the annual admissions to the juvenile halls are high—many times the daily capacity. For example, with an average length of stay of 10 days, the annual estimated admissions to a juvenile hall with a capacity of 50 youths would be over 1,800 youths per year. Thus, although juvenile halls can provide services to a large number of youths on an annual basis, programs for these youths must, by necessity, remain short.

Among the 11 counties, juvenile halls currently provide a number of CYSA/TANF services. We found that the majority of counties provided between 6 and 15 CYSA/TANF services in the juvenile halls, with a minority providing more than 16 services. While in several counties each CYSA/TANF service provided was claimed under CYSA/TANF, in the majority of the counties, not all such services were claimed under CYSA/TANF, but instead were claimed against or funded by other revenue sources. This was partly related to the selective claiming strategy adopted by a number of counties to maximize federal revenue received from different sources.

Most of the 11 counties used CYSA/TANF primarily to enhance services provided in the juvenile halls. These counties provided a number of formal treatment services in the halls, using CYSA/TANF to enhance these services. Life skills development services were also enhanced directly with or as a result of CYSA/TANF dollars. Fewer coordination services and services in our “other” category were provided in the halls; however, these services were enhanced as well. In general, enhancements made as a result of CYSA/TANF funds were more common than direct enhancements. CYSA/TANF funds were also used by the 11 counties to retain some formal treatment, life skills development, and ancillary services in the juvenile halls, with the most frequently retained services being counseling, monitoring, and treatment, and gang intervention.

As for how service provision within the halls was impacted by CYSA/TANF, the majority of the counties reported that real changes, above and beyond adjustments made for claiming, were made in at least one CYSA/TANF service provided. As to collaboration, in a majority of the counties, a stand-alone program (such as a mental health or substance abuse program) was used to provide the service. CBOs were used infrequently, with other county agencies brought in to provide the service either with or because of CYSA/TANF dollars.

Our focus was on the juvenile halls, but we found that the provision and claiming of CYSA/TANF services in the camps and ranches mirrored the results for the juvenile halls within these 11 counties. Similar to what was done in the halls, stand-alone programs were used to provide some CYSA/TANF services (e.g., educational advocacy, mental health assessment and counseling, and anger management). More often, if CYSA/TANF services were provided by an outside agency, it was another county agency rather than CBOs being brought in to provide these services either directly with or as a result of CYSA/TANF dollars.

What Was the Impact at the System and Individual Levels?

To assess the impact of CYSA/TANF at the system level, we drew upon three different perspectives – that of the CYSA/TANF program officers, the Chiefs, and the evaluation team. There were specific outcomes that the CYSA legislation hoped to achieve, such as placing a greater emphasis on increasing the accountability of youths, providing more direct services to youths and families, and placing a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, among other outcomes. The CYSA/TANF program officers rated their programs and/or services as having a moderate to large impact on CYSA-related outcome areas. In terms of CYSA-related goals, the program officers felt that the impact of their CYSA/TANF programs and/or services in their county was particularly in the areas of public safety and increasing the range of options that probation officers had in serving these youths and their families.

From the Chiefs' perspective, CYSA/TANF allowed their department to add staff and to add or enhance services within their juvenile halls and camp programs. In addition, CYSA/TANF provided a secure funding base for their custody programs. Also, Chiefs frequently mentioned the addition or enhancement of the range of services offered, particularly to low-level, first-time offenders and their families. If CYSA/TANF were to go away, in the Chiefs' view, major changes would occur within the departments. Most felt that CYSA/TANF and/or other prevention and intervention programs and services would have to be cut back.

From the evaluation team's perspective, CYSA/TANF filled an important gap in funding for juvenile probation services that had been lost when the Title IV-A-EA program ended in December 1995. These federal TANF dollars enabled counties to put back in place services that had been previously lost or to build back up services and programs that had been cut back drastically during the 18-month hiatus between the ending of Title IV-A-EA and the start of CYSA/TANF. Importantly, CYSA/TANF continued a system-wide "sea change" that had started under Title IV-A-EA, from a focus on surveillance and monitoring of youth offenders to a focus on families and on rehabilitative and therapeutic approaches. Requirements with respect to coordination and planning in the CYSA legislation also helped to increase the likelihood that CYSA/TANF dollars would be used to fill in service delivery gaps within the counties and that CYSA/TANF-funded programs would fit into a larger overall county plan for addressing children's needs. That CYSA/TANF and other grant programs required as a condition of funding that multiagency planning bodies be established collectively helped to establish an atmosphere of multiagency collaboration and coordination at the local levels. In addition, CYSA/TANF enabled probation to become a more viable player in a county with respect to children's issues in general, with CYSA/TANF funds serving as an important incentive for other county agencies and local service providers to partner with probation in addressing these issues.

To assess the impact of CYSA/TANF at the individual level, four programs funded under CYSA/TANF were selected for outcome studies for the evaluation—one adult field program, two juvenile field programs, and one juvenile hall program. The programs spanned the continuum of options for offenders. In the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), youths were targeted as part of a prevention and early intervention program. In the Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC), the 8% youths that have been shown to be responsible for generating the most crime after initial involvement in the juvenile justice system were targeted. The Placement Readiness Recidivism Program (PRRP) targeted youths in the juvenile hall with mental health needs who are responsible for much of the disruptive behaviors. Finally, the adult TANF caseload approached the issue of juveniles by targeting their parents for intensive supervision.

RAND staff worked with each site to develop a feasible research design, data collection procedures, and appropriate outcome measures. In all sites, a quasi-experimental research design was implemented in which either an historical comparison group or contemporaneous sample of adults or youths was contrasted with the CYSA/TANF program. In the two programs in which we gathered service-level information, experimental program participants did receive services in keeping with those outlined under CYSA/TANF; however, in the one program in which we contrasted services for comparison and CYSA/TANF offenders, CYSA/TANF offenders did not consistently receive more services than comparison (or routine-processing) offenders. Outcomes for the four programs varied both within and

across the sites. In all sites, we observed positive outcomes for CYSA/TANF program participants on at least some outcome measures. However, outcomes were similar for experimental and comparison group offenders on many measures in three of the four programs.

What is the CYSA/TANF Funding Environment and What are County Claiming Experiences?

Funding for CPDs is complex. Departments receive funding from a number of sources that change over time. Most relevant to the understanding of CYSA/TANF funding is Title IV-A-EA. Under Title IV-A-EA, CPDs received reimbursement for juvenile institutional services with claims based on eligibility of wards. This program remained operational until December 31, 1995. Starting in 1996, CPDs experienced an 18-month hiatus between the end of Title IV-A-EA and the start of CYSA/TANF. When CYSA/TANF was implemented, county allocations were made proportional to each county's Title IV-A-EA claim during federal FY 1995/1996.

The total CYSA/TANF allocation initially available to CPDs in FY 1997/1998 was approximately \$141 million. Since then, the statewide allocation has been approximately \$168 million a year. Overall, CYSA/TANF funding has represented about 10-15 percent of CPD budgets over the past several years. Allocations to California's counties vary greatly, with bigger counties receiving larger allocations. In FY 2000/2001, the smallest counties received allocations of less than \$20,000; the largest allocation was over \$68 million. On the whole, smaller counties tended to have fewer sources of revenues beyond CYSA/TANF and Title IV-E, so these sources ended up representing a somewhat larger share of their budgets than was true for larger counties. Some counties used selective claiming of CYSA/TANF and Title IV-E to optimize federal revenues received, and some CPDs (primarily the larger ones) established "funding committees" or hired consultants to advise them on how best to maximize their different funding sources.

The extent to which CYSA/TANF represents new program dollars varied by CPD and across years and depended on how the county historically dealt with Title IV-A-EA monies. During the 18-month hiatus between the end of Title IV-A-EA and CYSA/TANF implementation, some CPDs cut services, and some were able to retain services because county Boards of Supervisors (BOSs) allocated money out of county general funds. However, once CYSA/TANF came into being, some BOSs opted to recoup the bailout dollars by reducing the amount of county general funds provided to CPDs by the amount of CYSA/TANF revenue the CPDs were expected to receive. Thus, some CPDs did not ultimately have complete control over their CYSA/TANF dollars.

Given this lack of control, we sought to better understand the fiscal pressures the CPDs were under in using their CYSA/TANF monies. Overall, about one-third of counties indicated some type of fiscal pressures—either withholds in general funds to cover bailout funds provided by counties to CPDs when Title IV-A-EA ended, retention by the county of some portion of CYSA/TANF funds, or pressures to use the CYSA/TANF funds in some capacity other than what the CPD might have desired. However, despite these pressures, three-quarters of Probation Chiefs indicated that they felt CYSA/TANF represented new program dollars available to their departments. Moreover, over 90 percent of the Chiefs

indicated that CYSA/TANF was a very important source of revenue to their CPDs, allowing them to fund programs, save positions from budget cuts, and provide services.

Analysis of county revenue survey data, although limited because of differential reporting by counties, was consistent with the experiences reported by the Chiefs. Other county funding increased during FY 1996/1997 at the time probation revenues dropped because of the termination of Title IV-A-EA funds and was reduced in the subsequent year, as CPDs began receiving CYSA/TANF dollars. In subsequent years, increases in CYSA/TANF dollars were associated with increases in overall county budgets, consistent with CYSA/TANF adding new program dollars in later years. However, increases in other funding sources were also occurring at the same time and were probably partially responsible for the observed relationship between CYSA/TANF funding and increasing county budgets.

Conclusions

In assessing how counties utilized their CYSA/TANF allocations and the impact they had on the system and individual levels, the fundamental question is whether the intent of the CYSA legislation was met. The legislation required that counties do a number of things. These included undertaking a formal planning process that included establishing a local planning council representing a number of different agencies and community groups involved with children's issues in the county, getting BOS approval of the expenditure plan developed by the Chief Probation Officer and the planning council, implementing CYSA/TANF-funded programs in any of the 23 service delivery areas, and ultimately helping achieve the four overarching federal TANF goals. Overall, CYSA/TANF-funded programs were intended to help keep probation and at-risk youths from further crime and to develop the necessary skills to stay off public assistance when they become young adults. In addition, CPDs were to serve parents of these youths when doing so would promote increased self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, and family stability.

Of the 55 CPDs that responded to the Year 1 survey, 95 percent indicated they had established a planning council, and most councils included representatives from county mental health, local law enforcement, local school districts, county welfare, and the district/city attorney's and public defender's office. Approximately 80 percent of CPDs also had representatives from the county health department, child protective services, and the county BOS on their planning council. However, only between 20 and 30 percent of counties reported having families or at-risk youths on their council. In general, the councils—particularly those in large counties—tended to be fairly active, having responsibilities beyond CYSA/TANF, meeting frequently, and suggesting changes or making recommendations to initial or subsequent expenditure plans for CYSA/TANF.

In 93 percent of the counties, the BOS accepted all the CPOs' initial recommendations for expenditures of CYSA/TANF funds, with large counties more likely to have county BOS make modifications initially and in subsequent years to their CYSA/TANF expenditure plan.

A number of counties put their funding into the front end of the continuum of options. The 23 services eligible for CYSA/TANF funding were provided in the context of a number of different programs, ranging from contracting with mental health service specialists to providing counseling to at-risk youths

or to youths in the institutions, to establishing multiagency centers where wrap-around services could be provided to youths and their families. CPDs used their CYSA/TANF funds to both add and enhance existing services in the 23 service delivery areas stipulated by the legislation. In addition, counties used CYSA/TANF funds to retain some of these services that may have been lost because of cuts in funding or the ending of a grant program. Finally, approximately half the counties outsourced their CYSA/TANF programs and/or services, and of those, two-thirds used a combination of local service providers.

How well do the individual program outcomes address the CYSA/TANF goals of keeping probation youths from further crime, helping probation and at-risk youths develop essential skills to avoid dependence on public assistance, and helping to achieve the four federal goals? These goals range from being directly aligned with probation's traditional mandates (protecting the public and rehabilitating youths) to goals quite far afield from traditional services. In particular, the four federal TANF goals appear only indirectly related to traditional probation activities and programs. Requiring probation programs to evidence successful outcomes on these types of measures may be problematic.

Having said this, in the four outcome programs studies, we found that all addressed the first goal fairly directly and were able to accomplish it to some degree, although program effects were often small. Small program effects, however, are often the norm in this area. The second goal is addressed primarily through the provision of services and the implicit expectation that later on these skills will lead to reduced reliance on public assistance. Many of the 23 services provided help build life skills that should lead youths to more productive and less crime-prone lives. Finally, considering the 58 counties in general, CPDs used CYSA/TANF to fund programs and services in such areas as social responsibility training, parenting classes, family mentoring, educational advocacy and attendance monitoring, alcohol and drug education, and crisis intervention—all of which would contribute directly to achieving the four federal TANF goals.

In terms of lessons learned from the evaluation, we note the challenge of parsing the impact of CYSA/TANF, which makes it difficult to conduct analyses of implementation and impact; the need to tighten legislative intent to prevent the kind of "wobble room" that enabled BOSs to withhold some funding from CPDs; the growing need to demonstrate program effectiveness to effectively compete for limited resources; the need for CPDs to use CBOs more effectively; and the need to understand the difference in capabilities between small and large counties when it comes to implementing an initiative such as CYSA/TANF.

Six years after the Comprehensive Youth Services Act was created, CPDs continue to view the funding as integral to their departments' operations. CYSA continued a system-wide sea-change begun in the early 1990s that changed CPDs' monitoring of youthful offenders to an emphasis on families and on rehabilitative and therapeutic approaches. Counties have used CYSA/TANF to fund services and programs across the continuum of options—from prevention/early intervention through custody. Counties used CYSA/TANF to provide a large number of the 23 eligible services. Many, however, had a number of these services in place prior to CYSA/TANF. In this context, a number of CPDs used CYSA/TANF to build up their portfolios with respect to the depth and type of services being provided to juveniles and their families. CYSA/TANF funds are integral to CPD operations, representing approximately 10% of annual budgets. CYSA/TANF also served to fill an important funding gap after

the end of Title IV-A-EA. Our analysis of four county programs did not show marked program effects. Four programs, however, cannot provide definitive evidence for all programs across the state. Our “lessons learned” suggest further directions for better understanding the implementation and impacts of CYSA/TANF. Given the importance of CYSA/TANF, we encourage continued evaluation and monitoring of this program.