

Change Companies: Forward Thinking Journaling

Pilot Program Statistical Report

2020

Maine Department of Corrections
Division of Juvenile Services



Colin O'Neill, LCSW, Associate Commissioner

Galan Williamson, Regional Correctional Administrator

Sonja Morse, Juvenile Data & Research Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) sought to improve outcomes for youth within the Juvenile Justice System by providing Juvenile Community Corrections Officers with additional resources to engage youth in long-term behavior change. Through extensive research and fiscal support from the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, MDOC was able to train and administer The Change Companies, Forward Thinking Curriculum.

The Change Companies® is an evidenced based program which uses Interactive Journaling, Motivational interviewing, Transtheoretical Model of Change, Structured Expressive Writing, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to improve thoughts and behaviors of the participants.¹ Interactive Journaling is a method of behavior change through a structured writing process. The Juvenile Justice specific curriculum *Forward Thinking* is a cognitive-behavioral series that guides youth in making positive changes within their lives. The Forward-Thinking curriculum is made up of 9 individual journals, 7 described below.

The 6-Month Pilot Program was delivered from May 1st, 2020 to October 31st, 2020.

On April 24th, 2020 **14** Juvenile Community Corrections Officers, **2** Regional Correctional Managers, and **1** Regional Correctional Administrator, from Juvenile Region 3, participated in a 90-minute training on The Change Companies, Forward Thinking Curriculum.

Within the 6-Month timeframe, 7 of the 9 journals were utilized and a total of 36 interactive journals were completed. Out of the 36, 30 youth successfully opened and completed the journals, and 6 youth were considered unsuccessful. Out of the 6 unsuccessful, 1 returned to secure confinement, 1 moved, and 4 refused to complete. Across the 36 total journals, there was a 33% improvement in positive behaviors from the Pre-Test Survey to the Post-Test Survey. The average total score of the Pre-Test Survey was 2.70 and the average total score of the Post-Test Survey was 2.09. Out of the 30 completed journals, 100% of the journals showed an improvement from Pre to Post Test Surveys. The average total improvement across all journals was 23%.

There was an 83% success rate across all administered journals (N=36).

All Juvenile Community Corrections Officers (JCCO) who administered journals, were required to complete a facilitator Post-Survey. The results concluded that on average the JCCO's had positive experiences and believed that the journals positively impacted the youth.

Based on the data outlined in this report, *The Change Companies*® Interactive Journaling, 100% of youth who completed the journals showed positive behavior improvements.

¹ The Change Companies. (2020). *Interactive journaling*. Retrieved from <https://www.changecompanies.net/evidence/>

OVERALL JOURNAL DATA

These graphs are determined through the 36 opened journals within the timeframe of May 1st, 2020 to October 31st, 2020.

Figure 1: Total Successful Completions

A total of 36 Journals were Opened, 30 Successful, 6 unsuccessful.

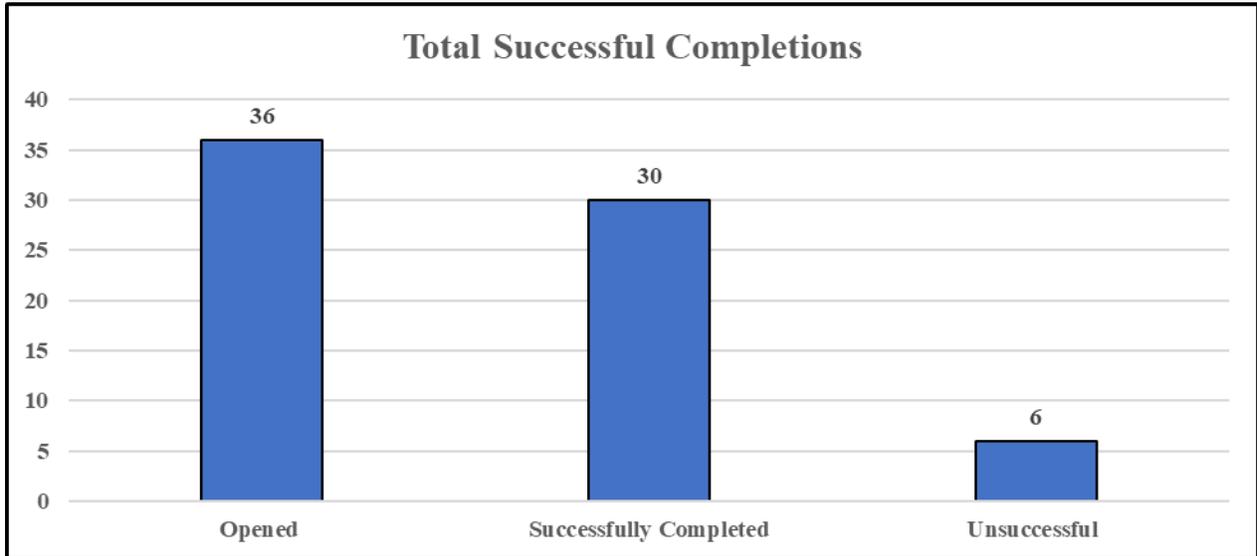


Figure 2: Total Journals Completed

The most used Journal was *What Got Me Here?* (N=12) Followed by *Responsible Behavior* (N=6), *Substance Use* (N=6), *Handling Difficult Feelings* (N=5), *Relationships & Communication* (N=4), *Individual Change Plan*(N=2), and *Family* (N=1).

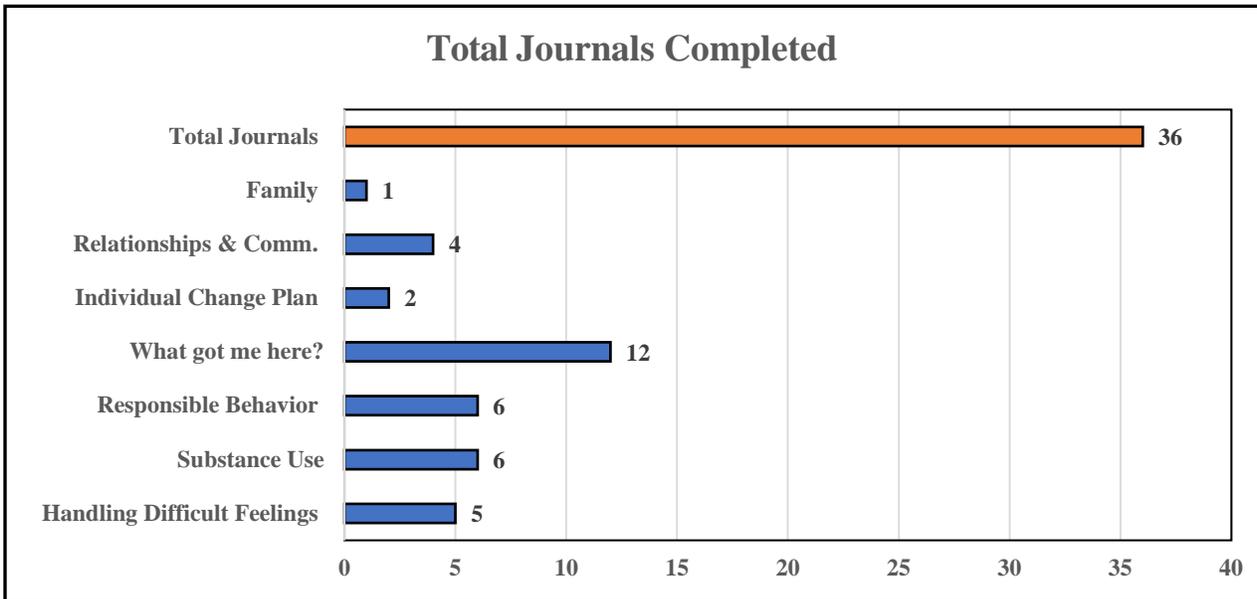


Figure 3: All Journals Completion Information

There was an average **23%** Improvement, an average of 1-point reduction from Pre to Post Survey and took an average of **40** days to complete the journals.

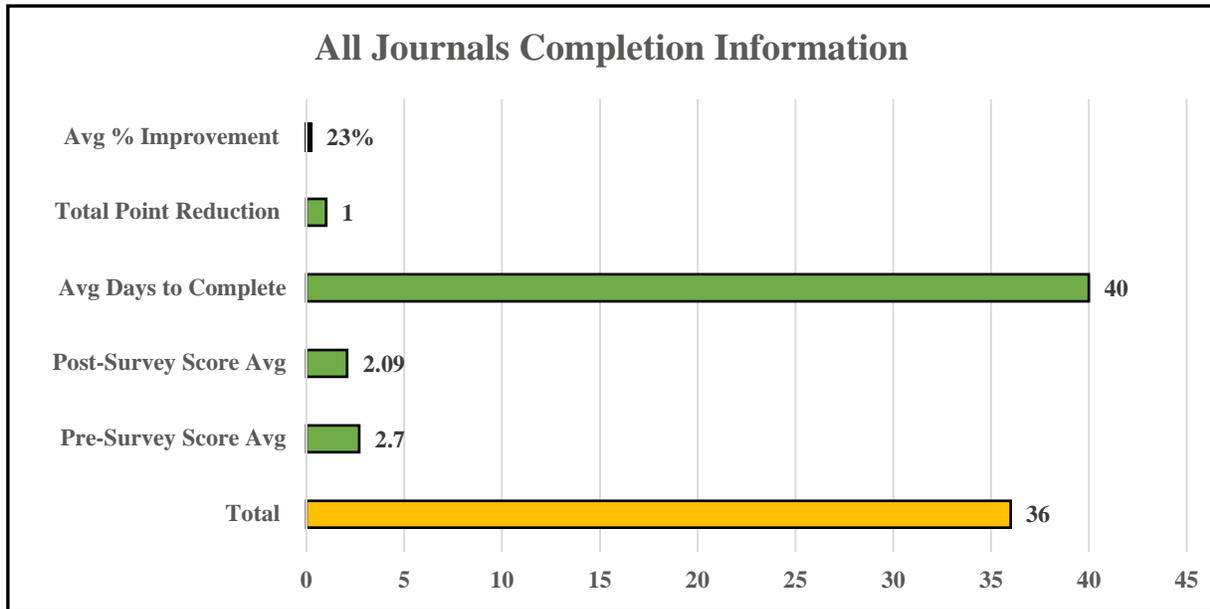


Figure 4: Pre to Post Test % Improvements

There was an average **23%** improvement from Pre to Post Test. Out of the **36** journals, **30 (83%)** of the journals showed positive improvement from Pre to Post Test Surveys. *Handling Difficult Feelings* Journal showed the highest improvement at **37%**, *What Got me Here* (**30%**) and *Substance Use* (**27%**).

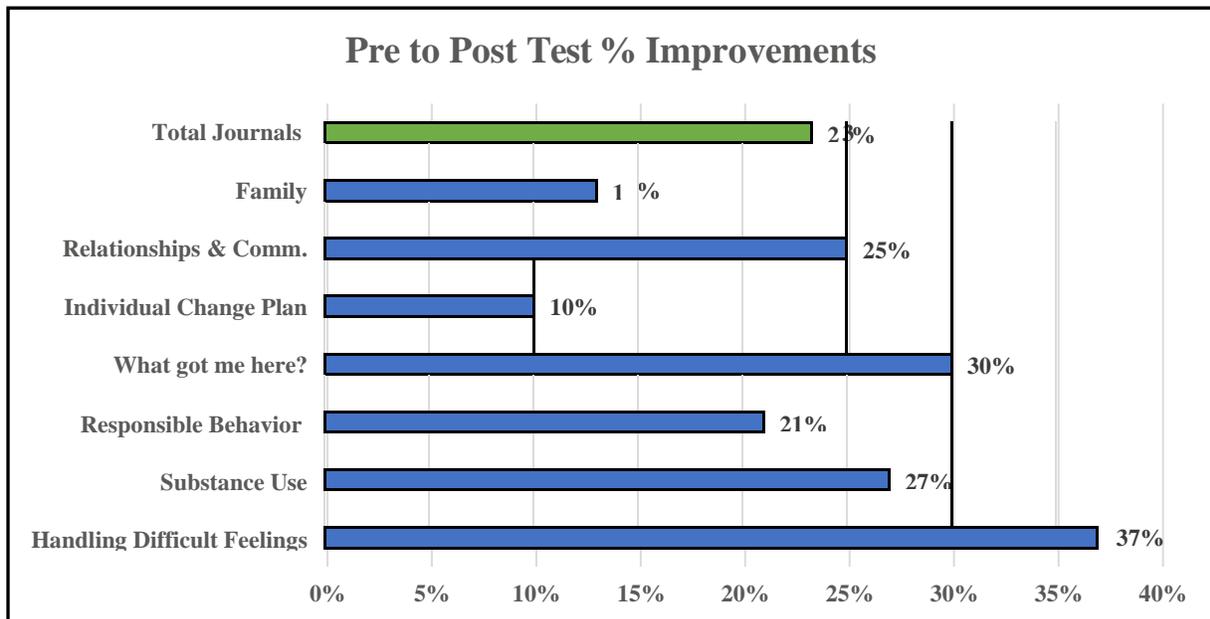
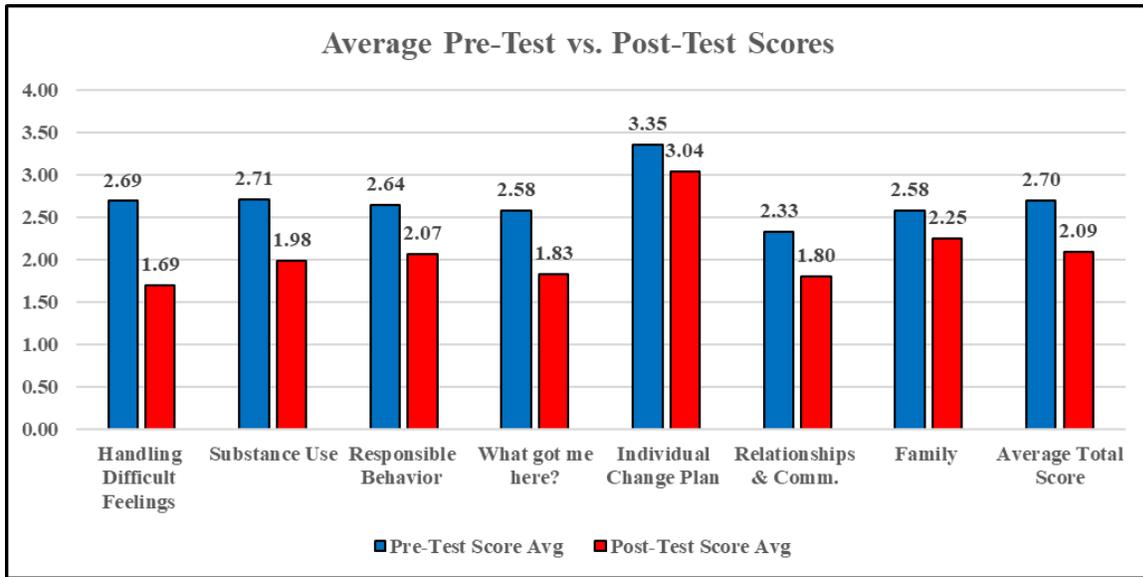


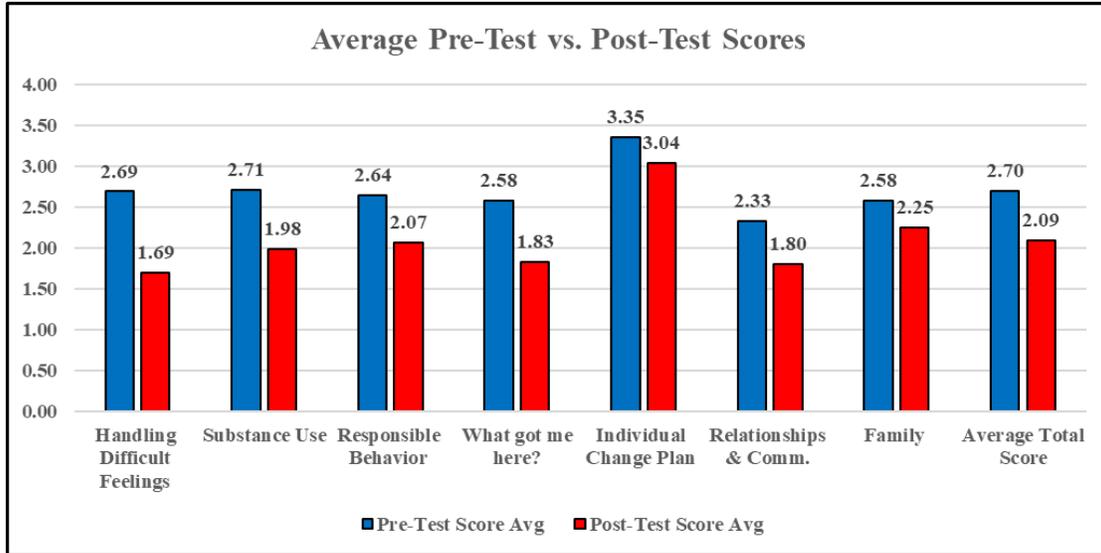
Figure 5: Average Pre-Test vs. Post-Test Scores

100% of completed surveys showed improvements from Pre to Post Surveys.



SPECIFIC JOURNAL DESCRIPTIONS & DATA

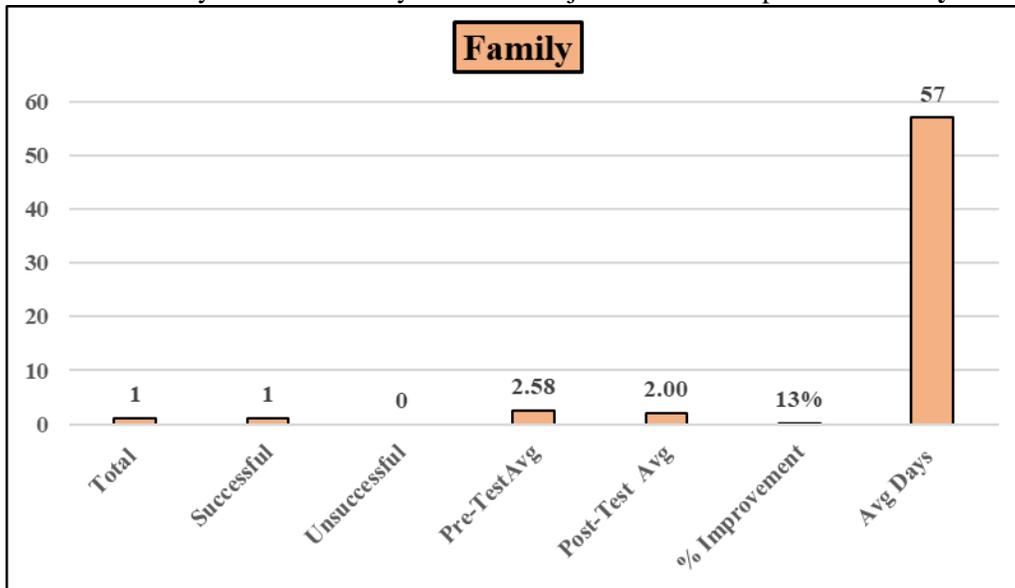
100% of Pre-Tests were Completed (N=30), and **83%** of Post-Surveys were completed (N=30). The 6 Post-Survey that were not completed were the 6 youth that did not successfully complete the assigned journal.



Family

This Journal assists youth in understanding and improving family relationships. The journal addresses and understand generational cycles and familial traits. ²

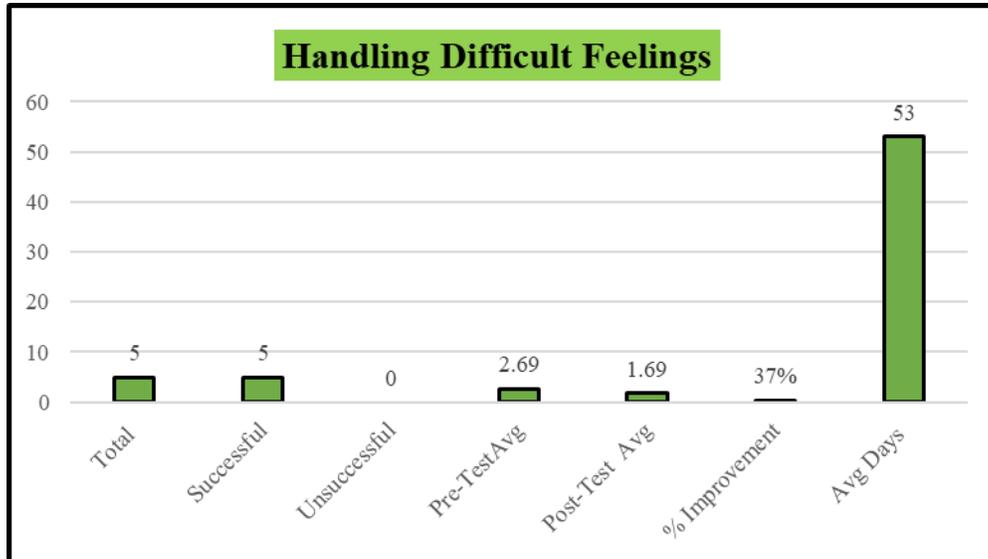
There was **1** Family Journal started and successfully completed. There was a **13%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results. This journal was completed in **57 days**.



² The Change Companies (2020). *Forward thinking series*. Retrieved from https://844aa8d177dcf87d02fc-8f72bb99f02c2e7ec80fe67c19b57c36.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/series/FT%20Forward-Thinking_v3p3.pdf

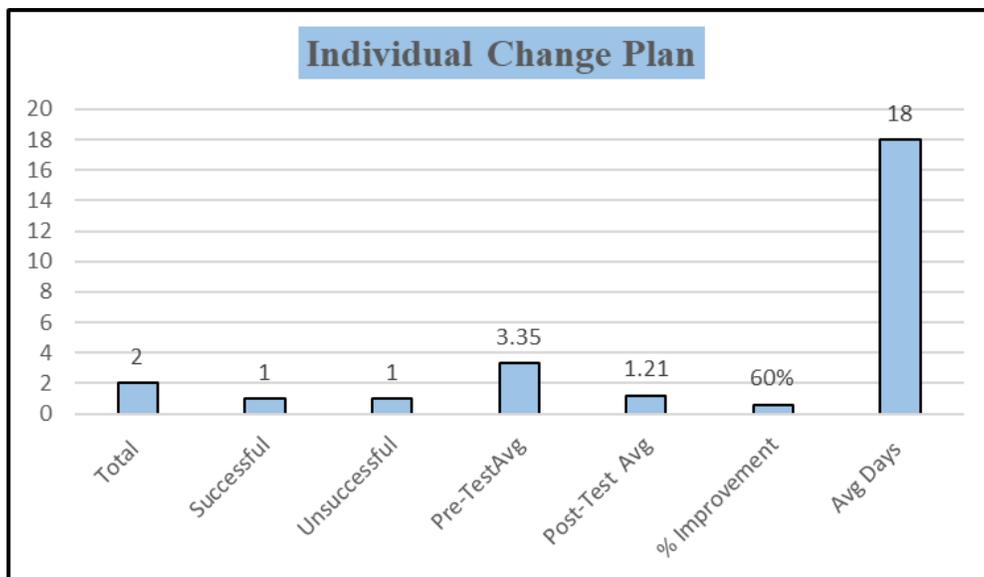
Handling Difficult Feelings

This Journal helps youth understand their feelings and behavior while learning new, positive, coping skills. ³ There were **5** Handling Difficult Feeling Journals started and successfully completed. There was a **37%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results.



Individual Change Plan

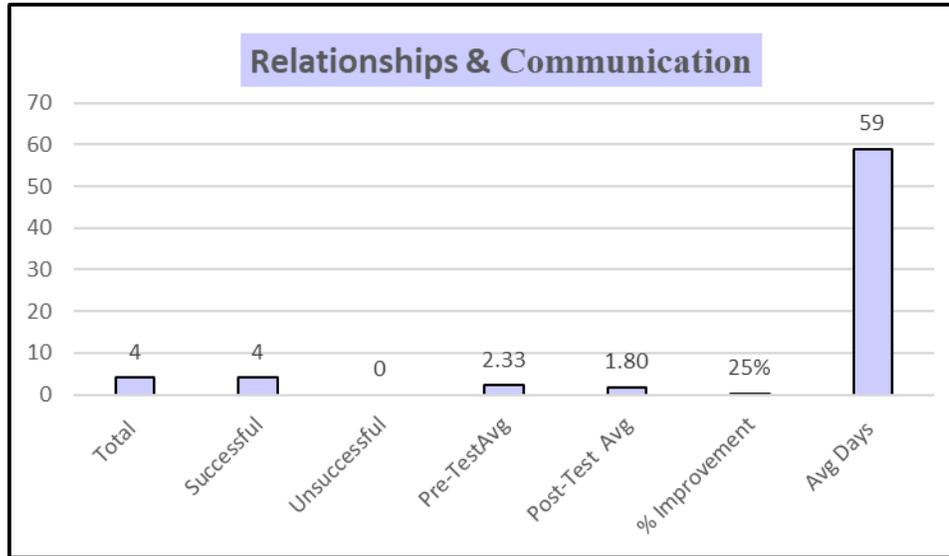
This Journal teaches the youth how to move through change in their lives, identify and develop goals, and learn how to measure their own success. ³ There were **2** Individual Change Plan Journals, 1 started and successfully completed, 1 started then was unsuccessful. There was a **60%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results.



³ The Change Companies (2020). *Forward thinking series*. Retrieved from https://844aa8d177dcf87d02fc-8f72bb99f02c2e7ec80fe67c19b57c36.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/series/FT%20Forward-Thinking_v3p3.pdf

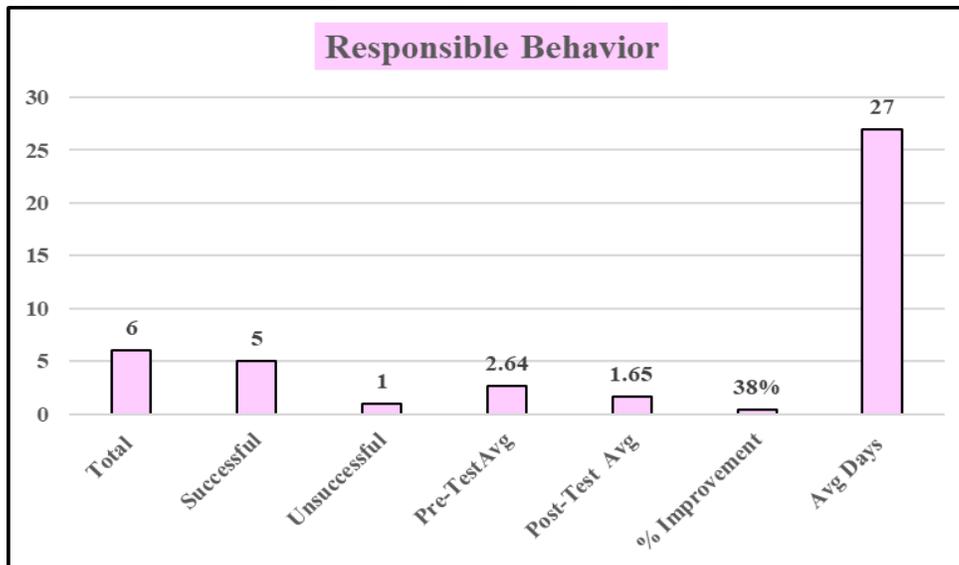
Relationships & Communication

This Journal helps youth understand how to activate and maintain healthy relationships, improve interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills, and develop pro-social hobbies.⁴ There were **4** Relationships & Communication Journals started and successfully completed. There was a **25%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results.



Responsible Behavior

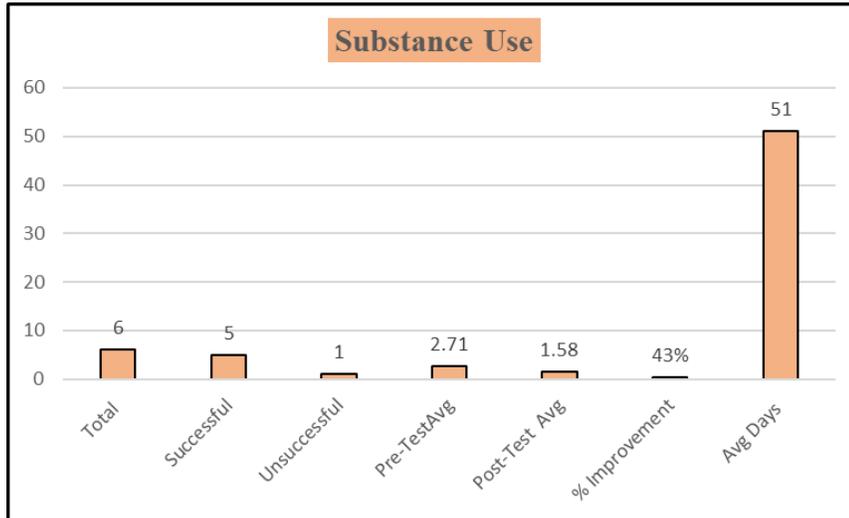
This Journal explores how the youth's thoughts and feelings connect to behaviors. The youth learn about behavioral choices, and the affects the behaviors have on other parts of their lives.⁴ There was a total of **6** Responsible Behavior Journals started, **5** successful and **1** youth who returned to secure confinement and did not complete the journal. There was a **38%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results. It took an average of **27** days to complete this journal.



⁴ The Change Companies (2020). *Forward thinking series*. Retrieved from https://844aa8d177dcf87d02fc-8f72bb99f02c2e7ec80fe67c19b57c36.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/series/FT%20Forward-Thinking_v3p3.pdf

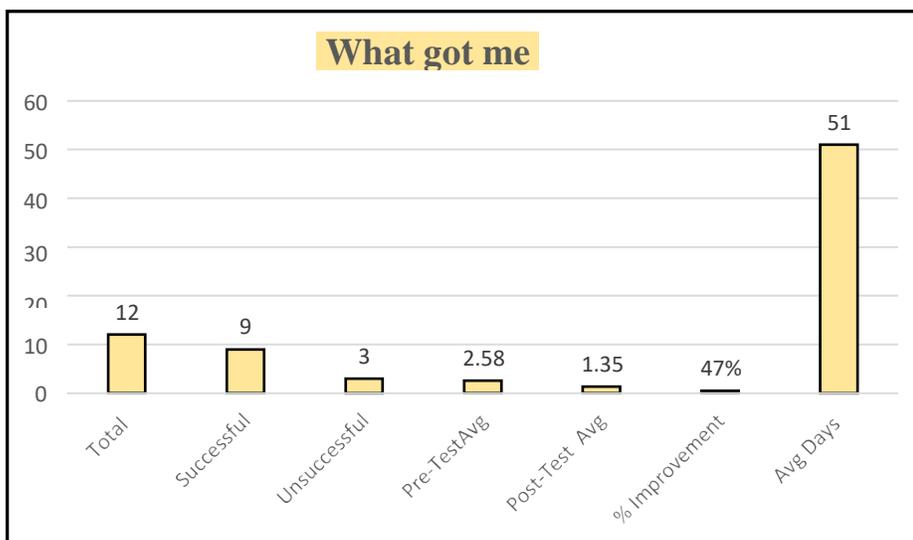
Substance Use

This Journal improves the youth's knowledge on substances, substance use, and how to make positive changes away from substance using behaviors. ⁵There were **6** Substance Use Journals, **5** started and successfully completed, and **1** youth moved out of the area and did not complete the journal. There was a **43%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results. Out of the 5 completed journals, it took an average of 51 days to complete.



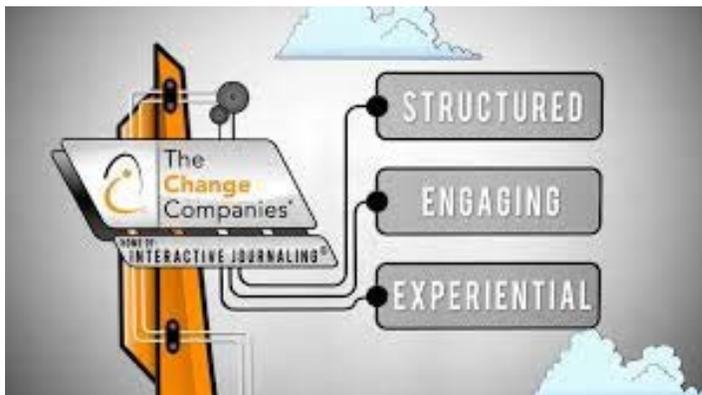
What Got Me Here?

This Journal helps the youth explore the consequences of their behaviors and criminal behavior, how to learn from the behavior, how to handle negativity around you, and how to work with the authority figures around the youth. ⁵There were **12** Substance Use Journals, **9** started and successfully completed, and **3** youth did not complete the journal. There was a **47%** increase in positive behaviors from Pre-Survey and Post-Survey results. Of the 9 successfully completed journals, it took an average of **51** days to complete.



⁵ The Change Companies (2020). *Forward thinking series*. Retrieved from https://844aa8d177dcf87d02fc-8f72bb99f02c2e7ec80fe67c19b57c36.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/series/FT%20Forward-Thinking_v3p3.pdf

FACILITATOR SURVEY RESULTS



On April 24th, 2020 **14** Juvenile Community Corrections Officers, **2** Regional Correctional Managers, and **1** Regional Correctional Administrator, from Juvenile Region 3, participated in a 90-minute training on *The Change Companies*® **Forward Thinking Curriculum**.

(Photo From Change Companies³)

Eight Juvenile Community Corrections Officers (JCCO's), from Juvenile Region 3, participated in the 6-Month Pilot Program and completed post-completion facilitator surveys.

88% (7 of 8) of the JCCO's identified that they agreed that the journals allowed youth to apply the skills learned into their daily lives.

88% (7 of 8) of the JCCO's identified that the 90-minute facilitator training **was not adequate to administer the journaling**; fortunately, a Journal Work Group was formed and 100% of the JCCO's felt the Work Group was helpful and beneficial to them.

88% (7 of 8) of the JCCO's reflected that the journals improved rapport; assisted them in gaining understanding of the youth; helped build empathy; and the ability to engage the youth from start to finish.

41% (N=11) of JCCO's reflected negative experiences across the 27 total questions within the facilitator survey.

75% of the JCCO's Identified that the journals were directly linked to case plan achievement.

(N=6)

100% of JCCO's identified that they will utilize the skills they learned in journaling facilitation in their ongoing cases.

100% of JCCO's identified that they agree the Specific Journals positively impacted the youth.

³ Photo from <https://www.changecompanies.net/interactivejournaling/>