



How can we improve mental health supports for justice-involved youth? Music and wellness interventions in the Bay Area, CA.

Background / Issue:

On any given day, nearly 60,000 youth under age 18 are incarcerated in juvenile jails and prisons in the United States (*America's Addiction to Juvenile Incarceration*, n.d.). California was shown to have a 230 per 100,000 youth incarceration rate, the second highest range of data in the United States collected in this survey. The heart of this issue lies in the conditions these youth face within juvenile halls as part of the California's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Hundreds of suicidality incidents at DJJ signal mental health distress among youth, leading to the DJJ's unstable closure in June 2023 (Maureen Washburn et al., 2021).

Overview of the FLY Program:

FLY is an award-winning nonprofit serving Bay Area youth impacted by the justice system (*FLY Program* |, n.d.). FLY's programs connect young people with positive mentors and role models, promote their understanding of the law and their rights, and support them to become leaders among their peers and in their communities (*2021 Annual Report: The POWER of Our POSSIBILITIES*, 2022). Their reentry program specifically (in the Santa Clara and San Mateo counties) runs for about 10-11 months and focuses on case management, pro-social activities, social emotional learning (SEL) skills, and mental health services. With an updated theory of change, logic models for programming, and yearly, comprehensive evaluation reports, FLY has proven to be a reliable proponent of consistent change in juvenile justice reform and reentry.

At a glance:

- On any given day, nearly 60,000 youth under age 18 are incarcerated in juvenile jails and prisons in the United States (*America's Addiction to Juvenile Incarceration*, n.d.).
- The California DJJ is coming to an unstable close in June 2023, shifting responsibility to the local / county level (Maureen Washburn et al., 2021)
- FLY, an award-winning nonprofit serving Bay Area youth impacted by the justice system, is part of San Mateo County's realignment plan
- This project brings mental health support to reentry youth via music & wellness

The Intervention:

This service project was an 8-week musical wellness program during the Summer of 2023 (May-June) to improve mental health opportunities for youth ages 12-18 who are formerly, currently, or at risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system in the Reentry programs of FLY, juvenile halls, and the Margaret J. Kemp Camp (a juvenile correctional facility) in San Mateo County, California, by aiming to improve mood regulation and mental wellness supports during the reentry process. An additional component of this project included creating digital mental health literacy resources and workshops for both reentry youth and staff.

Impact:

After completing the *Music & Wellness: Introduction to Songwriting!* program, Reentry youth have improved their perception of the way music personally impacts their emotions (self-awareness), ultimately improving resilience and mental health, as a whole. Reentry youth also possess the skills necessary for basic digital songwriting, as, by the end of the program, all participating groups have created 1 piece with a personalized title and song cover (The FLY Album: Vol. 1 a private collection of 3 songs, highlighted in a FLY July blog post). In addition, after seeing the impact of this programming, the San Mateo County Youth Services Center (YSC) implemented their own regular "Beat-Making" Program, a program that should cater to mental health needs on a long-term scale. Clinicians within the YSC Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS) have also agreed to utilize the *Music & Wellness: Introduction to Songwriting!* Google Classroom curriculum in their 1-1 sessions with youth. The new 10-activity Music & Wellness Binder has also been incorporated into the non-profit's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Toolkit. With the modified FLY Law Program curriculum undergoing approval and streamlined FLY Reentry Program Case Management Overview (including a searchable database of resources for staff/youth), FLY has gained more supports for themselves and for youth, potentially even reaching multiple county locations throughout the Bay Area.

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
\$7,000 from the Ingram Scholars Program, \$3,500 from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, support from the Clinton Global University Initiative, and resources and youth of San Mateo County (SMC) FLY Program office.	4, 7-week music & wellness program with FLY Program Reentry youth, juvenile halls, and Margaret J. Kemp Youth, along with compilation of digital mental health resources for FLY leadership.	4, simultaneous iterations of 7-week music & wellness program completed, and 1 digital mental health literacy workshop for SMC FLY leadership and staff conducted.	All participating youth better understand music's impact on mood. Staff are more likely to recommend a <i>new</i> digital mental health resource to youth.	Music and wellness program is continuously offered at the YSC. The Law Program, moving forward, will include a music and wellness activity in their Substance Use module.	FLY Program case managers report increased pro-social behaviors, social-awareness, resilience, and confidence among youth who engage with music and wellness programming.

Cited sources (Annotated bibliography: <http://bit.ly/3Id46B9>)