

**YOUTH ASSESSMENT CENTER  
CONCEPT:  
AN OVERVIEW**

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# Why is an Assessment Center Important?

- The majority of youth involved with the juvenile justice system have experienced traumatic events, with at least 75 percent having experienced traumatic victimization
- 65% to 70% of justice involved youth have a diagnosable mental health disorder, and nearly 30% of those experience severe mental health disorders.
- Significant disproportionate minority contact relative rate index (3.94) of minority youth being referred to court
- 4,829 juvenile summonses issued in 2015, 3,906 summonses were issued in 2016

# The Juvenile Assessment Center Model

- Provides critical prevention and early intervention assessment and case management services to youth and their families who may be exhibiting behaviors that put them at risk for justice involvement at home, at school, and/or in the community
- Incorporates numerous services and programs in a coordinated effort by different entities
- Increases accountability of providers that serve justice involved youth and at-risk youth, their families, and the community at large
- Provides youth with a greater array of services, at a reduced cost to operate and with more positive outcomes

# Concept Foundations

- Juvenile Assessment Center, Youth Assessment and Resource Center, JAC vs. YARC
- Juvenile Summons Program
- Concept  $\neq$  Plan

# How Did We Get Here?

- Monthly meetings of a working group that includes representatives from various government, educational and community agencies serving youth and families
- Extensive best practices research in coordination with technical assistance from Department of Justice/OJJDP assigned provider (CCAS)
- Site visits and peer learning with model programs in other jurisdictions (including Miami, FL, Calcasieu Parish, LA and Denver, CO)
- Engagement of other community stakeholders and youth

# Goals of Assessment Center

To **divert** as many **youth** as possible, consistent with public safety, **from** entering or going deeper into the **juvenile justice system**,

# Goals of Assessment Center

.....through **early intervention, comprehensive assessment, and referral to supportive services and positive strategies tailored to address each youth and family's individual needs.**

# Goals of Assessment Center

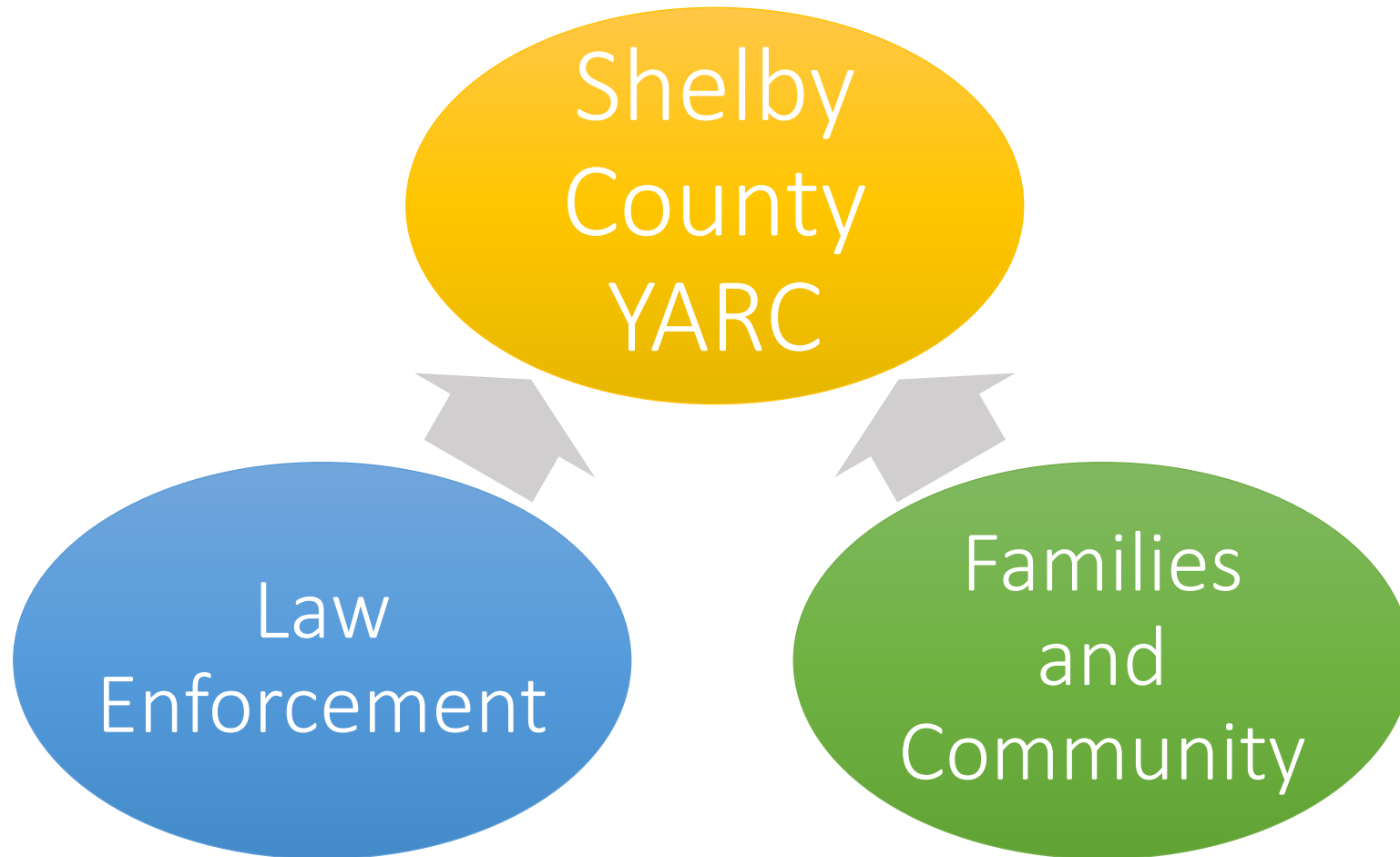
... increase **effectiveness in the use of limited community resources** through the elimination of duplication of effort and **enhanced accountability.**



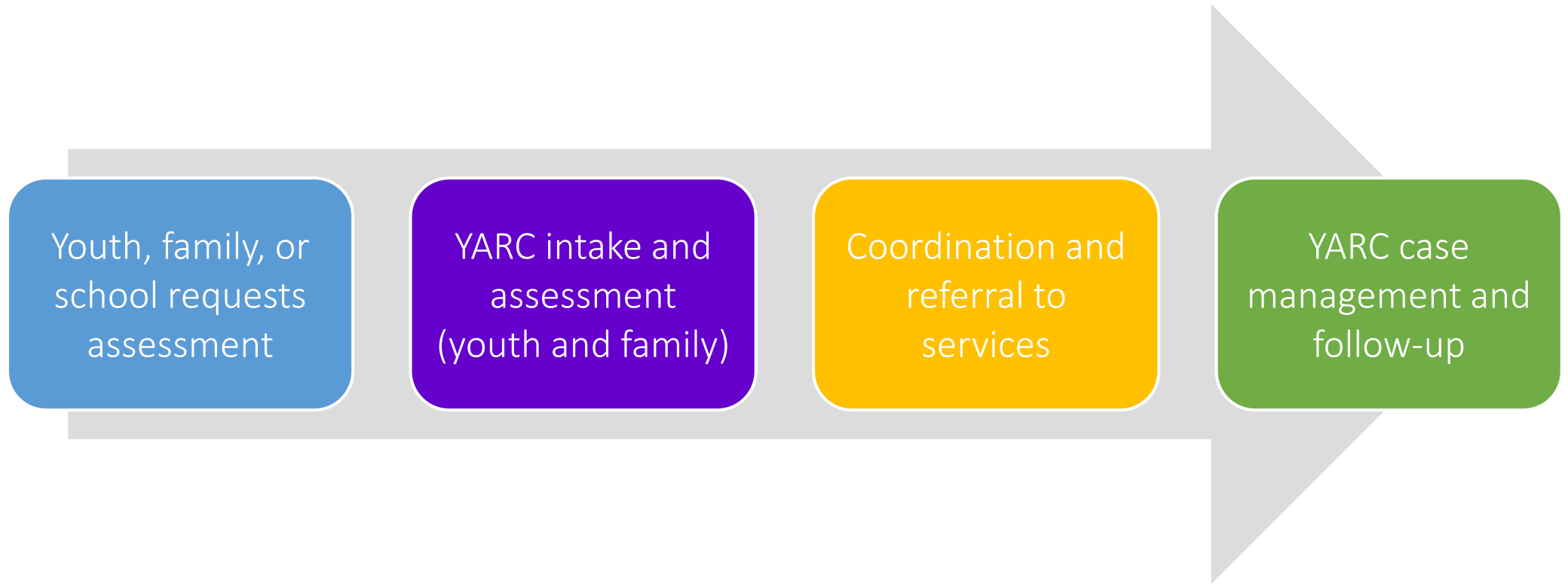
# Goals of Assessment Center

.... serve as a **resource** and facilitate better relationships between **youth, law enforcement, agencies serving youth, families, and the community.**

# Who Can Refer to the Assessment Center?



# Family and Community Referral Process



# Law Enforcement Referral Process

Youth presents to YARC  
(with a summons or not)

Intake specialists  
verify youth's eligibility for YARC

Youth provided initial screening and  
assessment services

Youth and family  
refuse services

Summons Review Team processes summons  
for pending status until completion of  
assessments, intervention plan and follow up  
programming

Youth and family  
accept pre-system  
diversion services and  
develop intervention  
plan

Youth and family advised of options available to  
them through the YARC

Youth and family receive  
comprehensive case  
management and referrals  
to appropriate services  
(internal and external)

Youth follow plan to  
completion, receive  
ongoing follow-up by  
YARC staff

Summons status moves  
from pending to fully  
diverted

Youth receives follow-up  
supports by YARC staff up  
to 12 months

# Proposed Features of the Assessment Center

- Mental health and trauma assessments for youth and families
- Individualized assessment of history and needs for youth and families
- Individualized intervention plans for youth and families
- Various co-located community-based services will be available on-site
- Peer supports
- Youth mentor opportunities
- Specialized reentry services for youth
- Diversion of charges for assessment center eligible offenses, with no resulting court involvement or juvenile record.

# Potential Benefits of the Assessment Center

- Offer opportunity to receive services that address underlying causes of youth justice involvement
- Provide a nonthreatening, inclusive atmosphere for those parents and/or youth simply looking for information
- Offer law enforcement officers a comprehensive resource to offer to youth and families who may exhibit signs of crisis
- Reduction in the number of youth who enter or return to the juvenile justice system
- Provides preventive assessment and services, as well as pooling of resources to save taxpayer dollars
- Offers trauma-informed, evidence-based programming resulting in better outcomes for youth

# Some Ways Success Will Be Measured

- Reduction in the number of youth entering the formal juvenile justice system
- Reduction in number of juvenile court referrals
- Reduction in the rate of youth disproportionate minority contact (at court referral point)
- Increase in number of youth and families connected to community-based services

# Further Considerations

- **Disproportionate minority contact (DMC)**

Are there any other implications of this center with the issues of disproportionate minority contact, due process, or equal protection that need to be considered before designing this center? Are there any potential unintended consequences or unexpected adverse impacts by the presence of the assessment center?

- **Community input and engagement:**

What are some ways to ensure community input into the planning and development of the center, as well as ensure ongoing citizen involvement in operations (i.e. mentoring programs)?



# Next Steps for Shelby County

As the primary operating partner of the proposed assessment center, Shelby County Government has identified a few key principles that guides us as we move forward in planning and development:

- The target population for our efforts are **justice involved youth**. Initial investments are proposed for this work because there is recognition that we can leverage existing resources and relationships to potentially move the needle for this specific population of youth, which does benefit all youth overall.
- Our primary mission is **to prevent youth from entering or going any further into the formal juvenile justice system**.
- The assessment center should have a primary goal of **diverting youth from the juvenile justice system involvement** (juvenile court and/or detention and DCS custody) through comprehensive assessment and referral to appropriate services for youth and their families.
- In order to maximize impact for all youth and families, we are looking to make investments (i.e. funding, program evaluation) in other systematic points, in addition to that of the assessment center.

# Next Steps for Shelby County

# 1 Create funding for piloting of programming for innovative projects/models that specifically focus on services that promote prevention of youth involvement in the juvenile justice system (think of The Door in NYC <https://www.door.org/>). Develop performance measures to determine outcomes and impact. Over time, expand or modify model of programming based on data.

# Next Steps for Shelby County

#2 Develop an assessment center model for youth who are at imminent risk of juvenile justice system involvement because of contact with law enforcement (delinquency offense or DCS matter). This would be an option for youth who have committed an eligible offense that could be diverted BEFORE going to the court meaning there is the expectation of no record of the offense anywhere in the juvenile justice data system and no shared data system between the court and center.

The assessment center will be an option to address the immediate needs of a youth that is in contact with law enforcement.

# Next Steps for Shelby County

#3 Strengthen or expand existing resources to enhance the ability of law enforcement to quickly determine best (and appropriate) path for youth to receive services, with goal to divert youth from formal system involvement. The current resources that could be evaluated include:

- Juvenile Summons Program
- SHAPE (School House Adjustment Program Enterprise)
- LEAP (Law Enforcement Assessment Phone-In Program)

# Additional Comments and Questions



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