HANDY

Embrace, Educate, Empower

Program Evaluation Findings

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CONSULTING INC.

Measuring HANDY's Impact: An Overall Program Evaluation

By Tisa McGhee, PhD

Background and Overview

For a host of reasons, from funding reductions to lack of essential services and legal protections for children and their families, Broward County's dependency system has several noted challenges (Dale, M and Reidenberg, L, 2016). The goal of the dependency system is to preserve and strengthen families whenever possible, removing child(ren) at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment while in the care of their parent or legal guardian when necessary to protect the child. A recent Peer Review Committee Report issued by ChildNet, Inc. for Broward County revealed Broward County's removal rate was 7.8 removals per 100 children between July 1 and September 30, 2015, compared to the statewide rate of 6.4 per 100 children (March, 2016). The result of the removal rate is an increase in the average monthly number of children in out-of-home care to 1,035, placing 63.5% of the removals in kinship care (ChildNet, 2016). Although Florida's child welfare laws and system aim to act in the best interest of children and their families, it does at times fall short of providing all needed assistances. To more successfully meet the needs of these children and families, more supportive services for in-home and out-of-home placements must be provided.

HANDY

Established in 1985, Helping Abused Neglected Disadvantaged Youth (HANDY) has met the needs of more than 50,000 Broward County children in foster and relative/non-relative care within the child dependency system. HANDY serves over 1,200 individuals each year. This includes approximately 800 youth ages 9-25 who participate in comprehensive programs that focus on education, youth development, and economic self-sufficiency. HANDY also provides one-time services and supports to families, impacting approximately 400 additional children and adults. HANDY's mission is to embrace, educate, and empower vulnerable youth to become engaged, productive adults. Although they have been incredibly successful at doing this work, HANDY has never completed an overall program evaluation. The purpose of an evaluation is to provide added value to HANDY's current work, demonstrating the program's effectiveness with youth, the public, and policymakers, as well as enhance funding and future program advancements using a Results Based Accountability evaluation model. Independent external evaluator, Dr. Tisa McGhee of Barry University and Mc3 Consulting Inc., completed this timely study.

HANDY PROGRAM COMPONENTS & OUTCOMES

The LIFE Program
LIFE (Life skills, Independent living, Foundation building, Education and Employment) Program. The LIFE Program uniquely combines case management and education services in a "supportive" family environment. HANDY fills the gap by providing intense one-on-one services focused around employment, financial literacy, academic planning, housing and other essential needs that help lead to self-sufficiency.

Youth Will:
- Have academic or vocational/education goals that are in keeping with the youth's abilities and interests
- Have sufficient economic resources to meet daily needs
- Participate in engaging activities that lead to the development of healthy pro-social skills
- Have a plan to secure safe and stable housing
- Have access to physical and mental health services
- Have a sense of connectedness to persons and community

Outcomes:
- Participants will be law abiding citizens and avoid unlawful behavior and criminal activity leading to criminal charges
- Participants will demonstrate improved pro-social skills and interactions with peers and adults and improved law abiding behaviors
- Youth/young adults will obtain secure housing utilizing community resources such as the FLITE Center
- Youth/young adults will secure/retain employment
- Youth/young adults will graduate high school or receive their GED
- Youth/young adults will enter post secondary education or industry-recognized certificate programs that offer a direct pathway to a sustainable career

School Based Programs
HANDY's school based programs provide youth development and tiered case management services during school hours, afterschool, and during the summer months.

Youth Will:
- Participate in out-of-school time services that focus on academics and youth development
- Have in-school case management services that reaches beyond the classroom

Outcomes:
- Participants will decrease risky behaviors and be law abiding citizens
- Youth will improved their school success factors
- Female participants will not become pregnant and male participants will not cause a pregnancy
- Youth participants will not use drugs or alcohol

THE HANDY EVALUATION

Completing an evaluation is important for HANDY to (1) *verify program efforts measurable impact on expected outcomes*; (2) *inform data based decision making*; (3) *identify the most valuable and efficient use of resources*; (4) *document successful approaches; and* (5) *serve as the basis to strengthen understanding around providing supportive services for youth in foster and relative/ non-relative care under protective supervision in Broward County*.

Key Research Questions

Who do we serve?
- Who is recruited for and participating in HANDY's programs?

How can we measure our impact?
- What are the program components making the most perceived impact on program participants in two programs: the LIFE Program and the school based programs?

How have we been doing on these measures?
- What is the historical background on HANDY's progress over the last three years?

How can we measure the quality of our service delivery?
- What are the facilitators and barriers associated with service delivery?

What is the impact on the community?
- What impact is made on the community & other stakeholders related to successful completion of HANDY's programming?

Data was collected and analyzed from a variety of sources including demographic data from HANDY, secondary data from funder reports and HANDY annual reports, quantitative data collected in person and via SurveyMonkey (an online survey tool) from a cohort of five groups: current program participants; caregivers (parents and kinship-care); alumni; staff and community stakeholders (community members with some involvement with HANDY, including board members); and qualitative data in the form of

observations, structured interviews/focus groups in person or via phone of the same five cohorts.

Evaluation Methods & Timeline

In order to realize the quality of the data needed for collection, HANDY administrators met extensively with the independent external evaluator, Dr. Tisa McGhee, to design and create the evaluation parameters. Dr. McGhee received IRB approval for program evaluation research from Barry University. Utilizing a mixed method approach, data collection initiated with signed consent forms and an explanation of the details of the study. HANDY administration provided a list of eligible participants from each of the five current cohort program participants, caregivers (parents, kinship and non-relative), alumni, staff and community stakeholders. All data collection instruments were developed in collaboration with HANDY and data was collected using the data collection protocol. Dr. McGhee conducted data collection and data analyses. This final report represents the results of all data points.

KEY FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Broward County is the second most populous county in the state of Florida with a population of over 1.8 million people, as reported in 2105 by the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research. According to the Office of Child Welfare "Spinner" Report (2015) the number of children in out-of-home care in Broward County was 1,035 in 2015, with a large percentage (63.5%) in kinship care. In Broward County, children placed with a relative/non-relative caregiver are not eligible for the services that foster care children receive, with most caregivers residing in economically disadvantaged communities living on fixed incomes. HANDY meets the individual needs of these children and youth. HANDY annually serves more than 800 at-risk children/youth who participate in its comprehensive programming. This includes:

- Middle and high school youth attending HANDY's school based youth development or life skills programs.
- Youth ages 8 to 17 years, who have ever been in foster or relative/non-relative care
- Youth 18 and above who are aging out of foster or relative/non-relative care.
- Displaced Haitian youth living with relative caregivers under protective supervision who were displaced by the 2010 earthquake.

Table 1 represents characteristics of HANDY participants during *2015-16*.

TABLE 1.

HANDY Participant Characteristic	(%)
Age	
0 – 10 years old	1%
11 – 17 years old	86%
18 – 25 years old	13%
Gender	
Male	54%
Female	46%
Grade	
3 – 5th grade	1%
6 – 8th grade	79%
9 – 12th grade	16%
Graduated or in College	4%
Race/Ethnicity	
Black, Non-Hispanic	91%
Hispanic	6%
White, Non-Hispanic	2%
Other	1%
Length of Involvement with HANDY	
0 – 1 year	33%
2 – 5 years	47%
6 or more years	20%

Source: HANDY Applications/SAMIS

ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPIC INFORMATION
HANDY serves all of Broward County and has youth attending colleges throughout the State of Florida and beyond. However, the majority of HANDY's youth reside in some of the most difficult areas of the county. These percentages and zip codes include:

TABLE 2.

| Zip Code	(%)
33060	38%
33309	14%
33313	9%
33311	7%
33319	6%

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS
To increase understanding of HANDY's service delivery success, reporting, funder data and other material from the past three years was reviewed.

Overall, the LIFE Program has shown consistency in achieving outcome measures from FY 12/13 through FY 14/15. Youth participating in the program have often achieved over the desired program outcomes in five program areas. (See FIGURE 1)

HANDY's mission is to embrace, educate, and empower vulnerable youth to become engaged, productive results.

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FIGURE 1. LIFE Program Trend Analysis
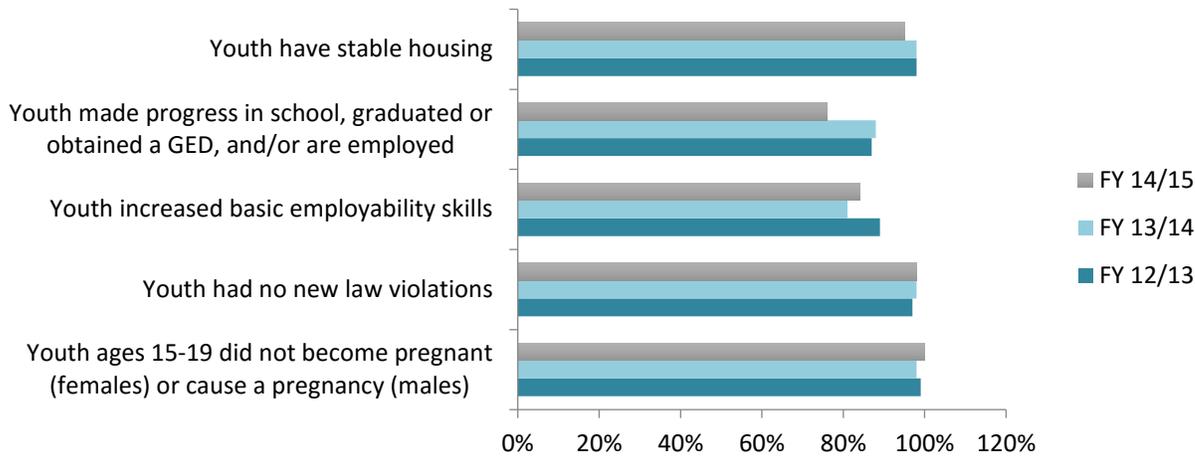
Further analysis of the LIFE Program trend data reveals 90% or more of the youth participating in the program during these terms had stable housing, made progress in school, obtained a GED or were employed, had no new law violations and did not become pregnant or cause a pregnancy.

Source: Children's Services Council of Broward Data FY 12/13, 13/14 & 14/15

QUANTATIVE: *SURVEY DATA*

Although it was a targeted sample of participating youth, caregivers and alumni were able to respond anonymously. A total of 61 of the 80 eligible participants responded for a response rate of 76%.

Data was collected from a total of sixty-one participants including: youth receiving services (21), alumni (9), caregivers (10), staff (12) and community stakeholders (9).

Of the forty youth receiving services, alumni, and caregivers who responded to the overall survey a majority receive services at the main office (70%) and some at the school site (30%).

Eighty percent of participants, including alumni and youth receiving services, indicated their quality of life has improved since working with HANDY staff; 88% feel supported by HANDY to strive towards and accomplish their goals; and 83% indicate having learned new skills since being in HANDY's programs. (See FIGURE 2.)

With regards to questions of quality of programming, an overwhelming 83% of the participants indicated they are satisfied with the programs they are involved with at HANDY; 88% feel supported by HANDY to strive towards and accomplish their goals; and 73% indicate having applied the new skills in other areas of their life.

FIGURE 2. QUALITY
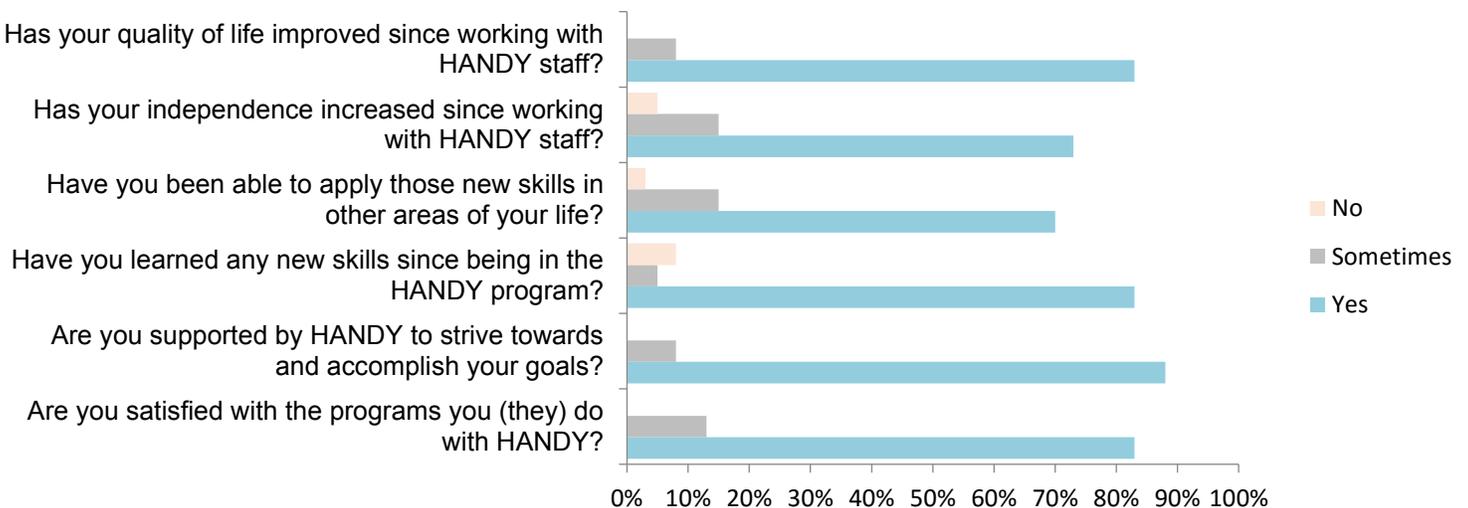
Source: Online and face-to-face survey data collection

HANDY PROGRAM COMPONENTS – Evaluation participants were asked to rank each of the following program components under the umbrellas of Embrace, Educate and Empower. Services were analyzed for their importance to each group.

EMBRACE

- Emergency needs assistance for food, clothing, beds, housing, transportation, healthcare

- Mentors and connection to positive adult supporters

- Bus passes and social, fitness, art and recreation activities

- Back to school shopping and holiday gifts

- Referrals to community resources

- Individual case management/ LIFE coaching

- Family Thanksgiving dinner

- One week sleep away camp

EDUCATE

- Prevention education (drop out, pregnancy, substance abuse, anti-bullying, juvenile crime)

- Individual and group LIFE Skills instruction

- Youth development and engagement sessions such as TOP Program curriculum

- Tutoring from certified teachers, peers, and volunteers

- Homework assistance and completion

- Liaison with BRACE Advisors and Guidance Counselors at individual schools to ensure that youth are on track for graduation

- College tours

- College preparation and inclusion services

- Other pro-social after school and out of school time activities

EMPOWER

- Employment skills training

- Career exploration and corporate exposure

- Job shadowing and career mentoring

- Service learning projects/paid internships/job placement

- Job skills training on resume writing, interviewing techniques, dressing for success, and more

- Independent living planning

- Florida Youth Shine Advocacy Committee

- Self-sufficiency training

- Service learning projects

- Peer mentor relationships

- Dance, drama, fitness, art and other recreation activities

- Referrals to community resources

HANDY PROGRAM IMPACT RESULTS

EMBRACE

While all services provided by HANDY appear important under the umbrella of EMBRACE, "Emergency needs assistance for food, clothing, beds, housing, transportation, healthcare" was ranked highest as a programming need by 46%, followed by "Individual and group LIFE Skills instruction" by 24% and "Mentors and connection to positive adult supporters" by 29%. (See TABLE 3).

TABLE 3. How Participants View HANDY's EMBRACE Impact

Top Three Ranked Embrace Services	Ratings on scale of 1-7
Emergency needs assistance for food, clothing, housing, etc.	5.77
Individual and group life skills instruction	4.46
Mentors and connections to positive adult supporters	4.25

[a] Rank order: 1 – 7 on survey, display top 3 on Table 2.

EDUCATE

Services under the umbrella of EDUCATE produce high ranking for all services, however, the highest rankings were "College tours" by 28%; "Tutoring from certified teachers, peers and volunteers" by 28%; and equal rankings for "Prevention education" and "Homework assistance and completion, Liaison with BRACE Advisors and Guidance Counselors" by 32%. (See TABLE 4).

TABLE 4. How Participants View HANDY's EDUCATE Impact

Top Three Ranked Educate Services	Ratings on scale of 1-6
College tours	4.21
Tutoring from certified teachers, peers and volunteers	3.67
Homework assistance and completion, Liaison with BRACE Advisors and Guidance Counselors	3.35

*Rank order: 1 – 6 on survey, display top 3 on Table 3

EMPOWER

Ten services contained in EMPOWER produced high rankings, especially those related to employment, including "Career exploration and corporate exposure" by 28%; "Job skills training on resume writing, interviewing techniques, dressing for success," by 20% and "Employment skills training" by 21%. (See TABLE 5).

TABLE 5. How Participants View HANDY's EMPOWER Impact

Top Three Ranked Empower Services	Ratings on scale of 1-10
Career exploration and corporate exposure	7.50
Job skills training on resume writing, interviewing techniques, dressing for success	7.29
Employment skills training	7.15

*Rank order: 1 – 10 on survey, display top 3 on Table 4.

FIGURE 3. ACTIVITIES SURVEY DATA

Activity	Rating
Dance, drama, fitness, art and other recreation…	3.71
Back to School Shopping and Holiday gifts	4.38
Family Thanksgiving Dinner	4.08
Referrals to Community Resources	2.48
One week sleep away camp	3.61
Pro-social after school and out of school time activities	3.45

Source: Online and face-to-face survey data collection   *Rank order: 1 – 6 on survey

FIGURE 3 illustrates highly rated activities that create a family atmosphere, as evidenced by the ratings for "Back to school shopping and holiday gifts" (4.38), "Family Thanksgiving dinner" (4.08) and dance, drama, fitness, art and other recreational activities (3.71). (See FIGURE 3 above for full scores).

Overwhelmingly, respondents reported that their overall satisfaction with HANDY programming was considered "Excellent" or "Above Average" with no ratings of "Poor". This data indicates an overall satisfaction rate of 83%. (See TABLE 6)

TABLE 6. OVERALL PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION

RATINGS	% of Responses
Excellent	58%
Above Average	25%
Average	5%
Below Average	2%
Poor	0%

STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION RESULTS

The stakeholder cohort was comprised of community leaders, funders and HANDY board members, including the board chair. A total of 9 of 10 eligible stakeholders responded to the online or in-person survey data collection. With a 90% response rate for the quantitative survey, 50% were chosen for a follow up telephonic interview. Overwhelmingly, 100% of stakeholders reported being very satisfied with the quality of HANDY programs; being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the way HANDY runs those programs; being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the activities HANDY provides that promote participant independence. For those stakeholders intimately aware of the service delivery, 89% of surveyed stakeholders report being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the way HANDY provides tutoring and educational activities. When asked about satisfaction with HANDY as an organization, stakeholders responded positively, as detailed in TABLE 7. below.

TABLE 7. STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION WITH HANDY AS AN ORGANIZATION

|	% of Approval
The quality of information received from HANDY	100%
The responsiveness of the staff at HANDY	100%
The competence of the staff at HANDY	100%
The knowledge, skills and abilities of the HANDY staff	100%

One hundred percent of stakeholders surveyed report being very satisfied or satisfied with HANDY's overall performance. One of the highlighted features of HANDY is the collaborative nature of the organization and their interest in the best interest of each child in their program. One hundred percent of stakeholders report being very satisfied with HANDY's collaborative nature.

HANDY STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

One hundred percent of eligible staff responded to the online and/or in-person survey. All 12 staff respondents reported being employed five years or less, working across programming and administration. Their overall satisfaction with HANDY programming was considered "Excellent" or "Above Average" with no ratings of "Poor." This data indicates an overall satisfaction rate of 83%.

The staff reported they were 100% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the quality of HANDY programs and programming for youth ages 9-25. (See FIGURE 4).

FIGURE 4. QUALITY OF HANDY PROGRAMS
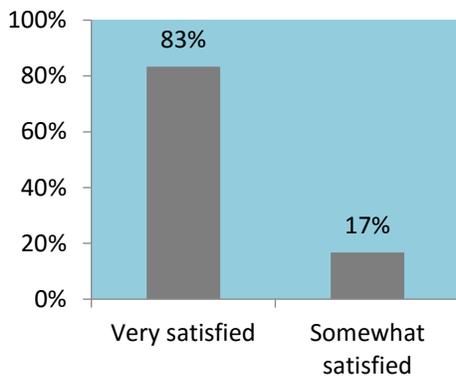
One hundred percent of staff also reported that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the way HANDY runs those programs and the overall performance. (See FIGURE 5).

FIGURE 5. HANDY's OVERALL PERFORMANCE
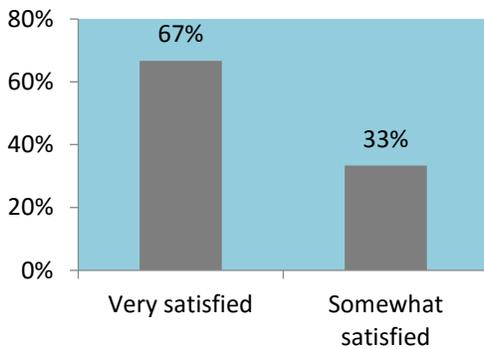
These results reaffirm the staff's commitment to the organization and to the youth and families they serve as they strive to improve performance.

Fifty percent of staff strongly agreed or agreed that they have sufficient resources to conduct programming while 42% felt they needed more resources. This is an area in which staff believed more resources are not only needed, but necessary to do their jobs more effectively. (See FIGURE 6).

FIGURE 6. RESOURCES AVAILABLE
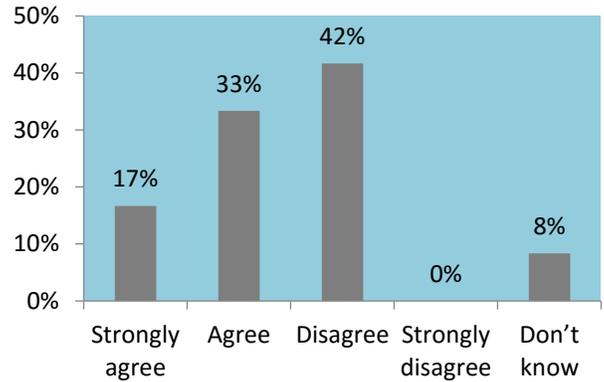
The staff reported they were 100% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the adequate support they have from HANDY. Staff report the ability to do amazing things in their job with the support they receive from HANDY.

Ninety-one percent of staff also reported strongly agreeing or agreed they were able to assist participants in achieving program goals. (See FIGURE 7).

FIGURE 7. ACHIEVING GOALS
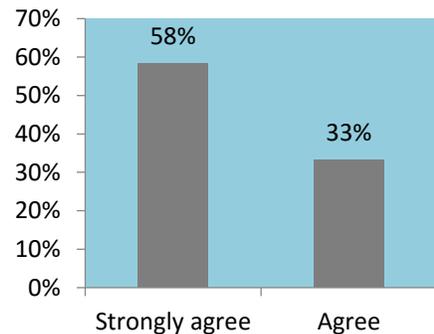
Finally, 92% of staff strongly agreed or agreed they are provided opportunities for growth and development.

QUALITATIVE DATA

To evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery, qualitative data was collected from a total of 34 participants including: youth receiving services (17), alumni (3), caregivers (5), staff (4) and community stakeholders (5). A 50% response rate was achieved through focus groups and individual interviews.

Key Qualitative Questions:

What are the program strengths?
- "What aspects of HANDY's program do you like?"

What are the program barriers?
- "What aspects of HANDY's program do you dislike?"

Are there any solutions, suggestions/ recommendations for change?
- "What changes would you like to see made in HANDY programming?"
- "What other types of support can HANDY offer?"

Staff, Community Partner/Stakeholder Comments

Interviews of staff and other stakeholders produced the following responses:

What are the program strengths?

- "The amount of time spent supporting youth" (case management services)
- "HANDY does what families do"
- "Overall supports provided to all"
- "Ability to collaborate and provide supportive partnerships"

What are the program barriers?

- "More room, space to be able to serve more youth!"
- "More staff and resources"
- "Board diversity"

Are there any solutions, suggestions/ recommendations for change?

- "Long term support of youth"
- "Acquiring more resources for services and staff"
- "Expanding supportive partnerships"
- "Creating a more diverse Board of Directors"

Youth, Alumni & Caregiver Comments

Interviews of current program participants, alumni, and caregivers provided multiple responses in each of the following categories:

What are the program facilitators?

- "HANDY is here to help you" – repeated by youth
- "All the services we receive" – by youth & caregivers
- The "Family" atmosphere provided – overwhelmingly repeated

What are the program barriers?

- "Not enough resources…"
- "Not having enough staff support"
- "Not having opportunities to have time to spend together"

Are there any solutions, suggestions/ recommendations for change?

- "More opportunities for youth to spend time together": i.e. college tours, sleep away camp and trips for more youth
- "Serve the right amount of youth and families"
- "Increase staff" and "Provide more resources for services"

> ## *"HANDY is a FAMILY…"*
> - Program Participants

Participant's overall responses indicated that they felt that HANDY has helped them to improve their lives. Staff and stakeholder responses indicated they needed more resources and are interested in board diversity.

Program Strengths

Overwhelmingly, current participants, alumni and caregivers shared their love of HANDY programs. All reported enjoying coming to HANDY. Large majorities felt that HANDY was there to help them and like they were part of a big family. In fact, being a part of a family is what most of the youth identified repeatedly as a strength of the program, especially when coming from disconnected or uninvolved families. Foster care research consistently refers to "youth" needing family support to improve development. The fact that HANDY provides a family environment is one of the most significant program components that impacts that the lives of participants.

Staff and stakeholders also indicated believing "HANDY does what families do" as a major program strength. One staff member stated, "The amount of time spent supporting youth is really important." He further reported that HANDY helps support youth when they may not have support from their biological families. Another area staff and stakeholders commented on was regarding collaborative and supportive partnerships. Statements like "[our] ability to collaborate and our supportive partnerships are strengths" that help HANDY to do great work. Program impact is achieved with the assistance of others in the community.

Program Challenges

Although participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with HANDY programs, some of them provided suggestions for improvement. Some participants indicated that they would like more resources (non-specified). HANDY has the resources to carry out each of the programs evaluated as part of this study, however, they are charged with doing much of the work on a very tight budget, often serving more youth and families than what is provided for in their service contracts. Caregiver participants did not say they saw a lack of resources as an issue but offered resources as a barrier, even stating, "Provide more resources for services." Youth perception of needing additional resources is reflected in a statement about "Not having enough staff support". Additional staff support could assist youth achieving the most impactful outcomes.

Other students indicated both as a barrier and a suggestion/recommendation that they would like to see more opportunities to have time to spend together. One participant reported, "It would be really nice if we could go on more college tours and overnight camps." Another student, who had attended HANDY for some time, said, "I remember when we used to go to a lot of trips and had time to get to know each other," (referring to other youth in the program).

A program barrier noted by the staff and stakeholders was the need for "more staff and resources"

> ## *"HANDY does what FAMILIES do…"*
> **-** Staff & Stakeholders

The need for additional resources and staff is a common opinion shared between the program participants, as well as staff and stakeholders. In addition to resources, staff specifically stated that they needed "More room and space to be able to serve more youth." When stakeholders were asked if this was important, a majority indicated the ability to have more space would help HANDY to achieve more impactful results.

> ## Barriers to HANDY work…
>
> ### "Need more room, space to serve more youth!"
> – *Stakeholder*
>
> ### "Need more staff and resources."
> – *Staff member*

Space for programming at HANDY has especially been a challenge since several programs are running simultaneously. Additionally, because administrative offices at HANDY share space with the programming site, there is a need for more room.

Finally, stakeholders wanted to see a more diverse board for HANDY. Increased diversity will assist the organization in receiving a wide range of perspectives to represent the service participants.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

As an organization, HANDY prides itself on the collaborative nature of its business and the reputation it has in the community. Data collected from stakeholders from a variety of community settings with several years of frequent connection to HANDY, revealed HANDY as a valuable community partner. This was illustrated by statements like, "HANDY is a fantastic partner and collaborator - we're honored to have the opportunity to work closely with them on community initiatives and programs" and "This organization is a source of pride for our community for the transformational impact it has on a vulnerable sector of our population." While the study was limited in providing data on the community impact made through collaborations, one partnership with demonstrated influence on HANDY impact indicators is their alliance with the Children's Services Council of Broward (CSC Broward). As a major funder of HANDY, CSC Broward has provided support not only for services, but also for staff and data analysis. This significant community partnership could assist HANDY in their overall community collaborative efforts and in meeting the recommendations made from this study.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation finds that the HANDY program has had a positive impact on its participants. A majority of current participants, alumni, caregivers, staff and stakeholders are very satisfied with HANDY's programs despite the few challenges noted by each group. This evaluation effort was undertaken for a variety of reasons including to verify program efforts measurable impact on expected outcomes, inform data-based decision making, identify the most valuable and efficient use of resources, document successful approaches, and serve as the basis to strengthen understanding around providing supportive services for youth in foster, relative and non-relative care in Broward County. It should be noted that the data and results provided did meet the aims of the study. HANDY has demonstrated an impact on youth and their families by being a stable, constant force in their ever-changing lives and by providing a family environment. HANDY provides a comprehensive solution to the supportive service needs of Broward County's vulnerable youth.

Based on the key findings of this evaluation the following five recommendations are suggested:

HANDY should…

1. Continue to focus on positive service provision efforts, strengthen measures used, and collect more data that reflects youth participants, alumni, caregivers, staff and Board of Directors needs to improve the overall satisfaction rate.

2. Reinforce and focus on the most needed services as identified in this study and provide referrals for services not being addressed, while continuing to support youth and their families.

3. Use data to highlight working strategies and eliminate identified barriers, most significantly described as being increased resources for staff and services as well as space for increased service provision in order for HANDY to improve performance.

4. Require ongoing data collection to monitor and provide trend analysis to inform decision-making and fund development.

5. Track collaboration efforts to note impact on community and HANDY participants.

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Acknowledgements

Mc3 Consulting Inc.

Mc3 Consulting Inc. is a national organizational development, consulting firm whose mission is to improve an organization's effectiveness using assessment, planning and training. Mc3 Consulting Inc. has extensive experience working with community-based organizations that serve inner city populations and provide prevention and intervention services for youth. Mc3 works with individual nonprofits, community agencies, for-profit organizations and funders in support of communities throughout the nation.
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