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The SWITCH Youth Program Executive Summary And Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Support With Intention To Create Hope (SWITCH) Youth program is a targeted, trauma-informed initiative aimed at reducing youth gun violence in Memphis and Shelby County by engaging and supporting youth at the highest risk for violent involvement. A program evaluation of SWITCH Youth was conducted for youth participating in the program from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024, to assess the strengths and areas for improvement in the program's implementation during its early stage.

A concurrent mixed methods design was employed to evaluate the SWITCH Youth program, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data to assess the implementation process. The evaluation aimed to assess implementation quality, interprofessional collaboration, and youth behavioral outcomes, with qualitative findings. The qualitative component, prioritized in this early phase, involved ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with twenty-one staff members, capturing insights into interprofessional collaboration and implementation experiences. The quantitative part included staff surveys using the AITCS-II to assess the level of interprofessional collaboration, and youth data to track changes in behavior, with both sources helping to strengthen the accuracy and depth of the findings through triangulation. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) guided the qualitative analysis, while fixed-effects regression and descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative changes in youth behavior and team collaboration.

Qualitative interviews with twenty-one SWITCH Youth staff members identified key facilitators and barriers to program implementation across the five CFIR domains. Overall, staff described SWITCH Youth as a promising yet evolving program. The strengths of the SWITCH Youth program included the program's evidence-based design, adaptive leadership, strong outreach efforts, engagement strategies, staff with lived experience, and interprofessional collaboration. The challenges encountered during program implementation highlighted the cultural mismatch of standardized tools, limited early identification of high-risk youth, lack of follow-up after the intervention, inadequate policy supports, and emotional strain from caregiver mistrust and boundary-setting difficulties. Staff emphasized the importance of sustaining relational approaches and improving organizational and systemic structures to support the program's ongoing development and success. The promising components of the SWITCH Youth program were corroborated by findings that revealed a strong collaborative foundation. Results from the AITCS-II measure showed high scores across the domains of partnership ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.53$), cooperation ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.56$), and coordination ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.60$), while also identifying areas for improvement such as role flexibility, service integration, and consistent communication to strengthen team effectiveness.

The evaluation of the SWITCH Youth program analyzed data from 186 participants over a one-year period, from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, to assess changes in youth offense charges before and during program involvement. Using fixed-effects regression, the analysis revealed a significant reduction in total charges during the program, with no significant effect of length of program participation. Significant decreases were also found across specific offense categories, including violent, weapon-related, probation violations, theft, possession-related, and

other offenses. These findings suggest the program may be effective in reducing youth involvement in criminal activity during participation.

Based on the evaluation findings, recommendations for improving the SWITCH Youth program and its outcome evaluation are presented using the CFIR domains as a guiding framework:

1) **Innovation Characteristics**: To enhance the unique features of the SWITCH Youth program, it is recommended that evidence-based models be culturally adapted to better align with the lived experiences of Memphis youth. This includes integrating creative and culturally resonant strategies that reflect the identities and realities of the Memphis communities. Additionally, the program should leverage youth's strong digital presence and rich cultural identity as tools for engagement and trust-building. Strengthening the program's interdisciplinary model is also essential, which can be achieved by formalizing collaborative team practices and investing in cross-disciplinary training to ensure that all staff members are equipped to work cohesively across roles.
2) **Inner Setting**: To improve structural readiness, the SWITCH Youth program should establish clearer role definitions, standardized workflows, and formal decision-making tools to support consistent and timely responses to complex youth needs. Enhancing staff wellness is also critical and can be achieved through regular reflective supervision, routine burnout screening, and more flexible scheduling to reduce emotional fatigue. Furthermore, the program should invest in role-specific training and implement incentive strategies to promote staff retention, boost morale, and support long-term sustainability.
3) **Outer Setting**: To enhance the program's responsiveness to external factors that influence implementation, the SWITCH Youth program should expand its community-based referral pathways by partnering with schools, grassroots organizations, and trusted community figures to support earlier identification of high-risk youth. Additionally, establishing formal post-program follow-up services is essential to ensure continued support and sustained outcomes. This effort should be complemented by the development of integrated data systems that enable long-term

tracking across service sectors. Finally, the program should advocate for broader policy supports, including youth stipends to reinforce engagement, trauma-informed job readiness programs, access to stable housing, and firearm safety education to address the systemic barriers faced by participating youth.

4) **Characteristics of Individuals**: To empower both staff and youth through personalized and inclusive approaches, the SWITCH Youth program should deepen its investment in staff with lived experience by providing structured training, mentorship, and clearly defined professional development pathways to enhance their effectiveness and long-term commitment. Staff have put significant effort into developing their own strategies to engage youth, often tailoring their approaches based on each youth's unique interests, communication preferences, and relational dynamics. To further support and formalize these efforts, the program should implement individualized engagement plans that guide staff in building consistent, meaningful, and youth-centered relationships. Additionally, it is essential to integrate gender-responsive strategies to ensure equitable support and address the distinct experiences and risks faced by girls in the program.
5) **Implementation Process**: To improve the efficiency, sustainability, and ethical clarity in program delivery, first, documentation requirements should be streamlined by eliminating redundancies and redesigning workflows with input from frontline staff to reduce administrative burden and free up time for direct youth engagement. Next, to ensure service continuity during staff turnover, structured transition protocols, such as joint handoffs and shared communication strategies, should be implemented. Additionally, the outreach component should be strengthened as a distinct pre-enrollment phase with clearly defined objectives and success measures to guide early engagement efforts. Lastly, staff should receive ongoing ethical guidance and training to help them navigate dual roles, safeguard youth confidentiality, and reduce the emotional burden associated with documentation in sensitive contexts.

Following this formative evaluation, several actions are recommended to guide the next outcome evaluation, providing a more comprehensive and meaningful assessment of the SWITCH Youth program's long-term impact. First, data collection should be expanded to include post-program

and follow-up measures that capture sustained progress in youth outcomes over time. Outcome indicators identified by staff, such as school attendance, job readiness and retention, and recidivism, should be prioritized to ensure alignment with the program's goals and on-the-ground insights. More importantly, to enhance the evaluation's relevance and responsiveness, youth and caregiver voices should be centered through participatory methods like surveys, interviews, and storytelling. Additionally, the development of integrated, cross-system data-sharing frameworks will allow for better tracking of youth trajectories across education, child welfare, and justice systems. Finally, securing sustainable funding is essential to support a rigorous outcome evaluation and to maintain the SWITCH Youth program's intensive, relationship-based model of intervention.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Program Goals and Background

The Support With Intention To Create Hope (SWITCH) Youth program is a targeted, trauma-informed initiative designed to reduce youth gun violence in Memphis and Shelby County by supporting youth at the highest risk of involvement in violence. Developed by Youth Villages as part of the broader Memphis Allies Initiative, SWITCH Youth promotes collaboration among community stakeholders to deliver meaningful and individualized support to high-risk youth. Memphis Allies launched this multi-sector initiative in response to urgent calls from city leaders who recognized that reducing violent crime requires coordinated efforts from families, neighborhoods, churches, businesses, community organizations, and government agencies. With a goal of reaching over 2,000 youth and adults within four years, Memphis Allies offers both intervention and prevention strategies. These strategies are grounded in research showing that a small number of individuals are typically responsible for the majority of a city's violence, and that focused support for these individuals can lead to significant reductions. The SWITCH model builds on successful violence reduction efforts in cities such as Oakland, New York City, Chicago, and Stockton by combining intensive services, credible messengers, and strong community partnerships. Through SWITCH Youth, Youth Villages, which has served as the implementing organization since 2022, strives to break cycles of violence and build safer, healthier communities across Memphis and Shelby County.

Target Youth Population and Program Implementation

The SWITCH Youth program focuses on youth ages 12 to 18 who are at high risk for violence due to legal charges, involvement with gun-related offenses, associations with high-risk

peer groups, or family members engaged in criminal activity. SWITCH Youth identifies high-risk youth through strong partnerships with referring agencies, including the juvenile justice system, and leverages data-informed practices to guide outreach and service delivery. Central to SWITCH Youth's approach is the active involvement of caregivers, which fosters a supportive environment focused on accountability, goal-setting, and sustainable behavioral change. As a core component of the Memphis Allies Initiative, SWITCH Youth seeks to disrupt cycles of violence by addressing root causes through mentorship, trauma-informed care, and collaborative community engagement, ultimately contributing to a safer and more resilient Memphis. SWITCH programming is long-term, typically lasting 12 to 18 months, with some youth participating for nearly two years.

The SWITCH Youth program is delivered by an interdisciplinary team comprising Outreach Specialists, Life Coaches, Case Managers, Clinical Specialists, and a Clinical Supervisor. The team provides intensive, individualized support through tailored services such as life planning, therapy, educational and employment support, and connections to essential community resources that foster engagement in pro-social activities. Each team includes three Life Coaches, one Case Manager, three Clinical Specialists, and one Clinical Supervisor. Life Coaches and Clinical Specialists maintain small caseloads of approximately five youth each, allowing for consistent relationship-building and personalized service delivery. Case Managers serve a broader support role with an average caseload of 30 to 36 youth, helping to connect participants and their caregivers to external services. The Clinical Supervisor oversees all team members and provides direct supervision and clinical guidance. This team structure is further supported by a Regional Supervisor, Assistant Director, and Director, along with Licensed Program Experts and Clinical Program Managers who ensure service quality, facilitate

interdisciplinary coordination, and support fidelity to the program model. This layered structure, including 24/7 on-call availability, enables SWITCH Youth to maintain continuity of care, accommodate staff absences, and ensure responsive, trauma-informed service delivery.

Once a youth is identified or a referral is accepted, the youth and their caregivers will receive intensive, wraparound services from the SWITCH Youth team. Life Coaches with relevant lived experiences, such as surviving gun violence, play a key role in establishing credibility and shared understanding with the youth. The Life Coach helps the youth develop a personalized Life Plan and provides ongoing mentorship. The Life Plan process helps identify each youth's needs across areas such as education, employment, housing, legal issues, and access to basic needs, and creates a personalized service strategy. The initial Life Plan is completed within two weeks of case opening and is updated monthly, with Life Coaches using this time to build rapport and begin identifying the youth's initial goals. Information for the Life Plan is gathered from intake assessments, referral sources, legal history, and interviews with both the youth and their caregiver. Youth play an active role in defining their Life Plan, which includes goals in key life domains like housing, education, employment, health, and relationships. The Case Manager links them to specialized services aligned with their goals.

The Clinical Specialist plays a central role in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the Treatment Plan. They collaborate with the youth and their caregiver to assess clinical needs, identify referral issues, and define treatment goals and interventions. The Clinical Specialist is responsible for selecting appropriate therapeutic approaches (e.g., individual or family therapy, trauma-informed interventions), documenting progress, and adjusting the plan as needed to ensure it remains responsive to the youth's evolving needs and circumstances. The

Treatment Plan is updated montly, with progress and adjustments documented regularly to reflect changes in the youth's needs and response to services.

For the SWITCH Youth staff members, the SWITCH Youth program has a multi-layered supervision structure to ensure effective support and accountability for team members. Life Coaches and Case Managers receive three levels of supervision: weekly individual supervision with a Clinical Supervisor, weekly group supervision with their team, and weekly consultation meetings led by a Licensed Program Expert (LPE). Similarly, Clinical Specialists also receive weekly individual supervision based on their clinical and developmental needs, participate in weekly group supervision with their team, and attend weekly full-team consultation meetings. These layers of supervision are designed to enhance service quality, promote professional development, and ensure coordinated care. All supervision sessions are documented and become part of the staff member's personnel record.

Compliance and Accountability

The SWITCH Youth program ensures compliance and accountability through structured policies and procedures that prioritize participant safety, staff oversight, and adherence to ethical and legal standards. Central to its approach is a commitment to performance monitoring and data collection to evaluate the program's effectiveness in reducing youth violence and supporting positive life changes. Internal data systems, such as Evolv and Salesforce, are used to track participant progress, supplemented by weekly supervision, case reviews, and Red Flag Reviews to identify high-risk cases requiring additional support. Each youth's involvement is guided by individualized Life Plans and Treatment Plans, which are regularly updated to reflect changing needs and goals. The SWITCH Youth program enforces critical incident reporting protocols, requiring staff to document and report events such as maltreatment allegations, threats of harm,

or new legal involvement within 24 hours using internal systems. The program offers a formal grievance procedure that allows youth and caregivers to report concerns, protecting their rights and ensuring service quality. In crisis situations, team members must immediately notify supervisors to ensure a timely and coordinated response. To further promote safety and accountability, the program has established clear protocols around weapons safety, transportation, and crisis intervention, as well as documentation standards and frequent case updates. Staff are also guided by worker safety policies that include risk assessments, contingency plans, and supervisor check-ins for all community-based visits.

Chapter Two

Methods

Formative Evaluation

A formative evaluation was conducted by an external evaluation entity (University of Memphis) to assess the operational process of the SWITCH Youth program during its early stages. Formative evaluation takes place before or during the initial phases of program implementation, often during the planning or pilot phase (Nieveen & Folmer, 2013). The primary purpose of formative research is to provide feedback and gather information that can be used to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program, refine the program based on feedback, and propose appropriate outcome measures for the program's outcome evaluation before it is fully implemented or finalized (Burns, 2008). Formative evaluation often includes input from key stakeholders, such as practitioners, experts, and program participants, to inform decision-making (Burns, 2008). Overall, formative evaluation is a proactive and dynamic approach to program development and improvement, ensuring that the program is well-designed, responsive to needs, and capable of achieving their intended outcomes.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the SWITCH Youth program evaluation was to assess and understand the program implementation process, identify its strengths and areas for improvement, and explore the factors that contribute to its potential success in preventing youth gun violence. The purpose aligns with the goal of the SWITCH Youth program to reduce the involvement of youth in gun violence through a holistic, multidisciplinary team approach that address the underlying risk factors, provides targeted interventions, and promotes prosocial behavior. The program focuses on engaging at risk youth with evidence-based strategies and

support services designed to enhance their behavioral functioning, reduce risks for violence in their environments, and foster positive relationships with their families, peers, and communities. This formative evaluation will provide valuable insights for refining the program and ensuring its effectiveness in achieving its long-term goals of gun violence prevention and positive youth development.

Objectives

Given that the SWITCH Youth program is at the initial phases of program implementation, the formative evaluation aims to examine key characteristics of participating youth and aspects of the program. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the SWITCH Youth program, involving staff with diverse personal and professional backgrounds and various roles, this evaluation also aims to assess staff perceptions of interdisciplinary team collaboration. Furthermore, the evaluation seeks to identify program, system, practice, and person-level characteristics that have the potential to lead to positive outcomes for youth and their families, based on the experiences and perspectives of professionals involved in the program implementation process. Through this process, the evaluation aims to identify the barriers and facilitators in each domain of the program's implementation. The SWITCH Youth program evaluation began with seven questions that reflect its objectives, as follows:

(1) What are the demographic and program involvement-related characteristics of youth referred to the SWITCH Youth program?

(2) What are the risks and needs of youth referred to the SWITCH Youth program?

(3) What are the engagement activities and services provided to participating youth in the SWITCH Youth program?

(4) To what extent does the SWITCH Youth program lead to changes in youth behavioral functioning during the program implementation?

(5) How do the staff with different personal and professional backgrounds collaborate in the implementation process of in the SWITCH Youth program?

(6) What are the program, system, practice, and person-level characteristics of the SWITCH Youth program implementation?

(7) What are the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of the SWITCH Youth program that hinder or promote positive outcomes for participating youth and families?

Evaluation Research Design

Concurrent mixed methods design was employed to answer the questions for seven established objectives in this program evaluation (Haight & Bidwell, 2016). This evaluation research design involves the separate collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. In this design, both qualitative and quantitative data are concurrently collected and independently analyzed and then merged to yield a more comprehensive understanding than would be obtained by either type of data analysis results alone (Haight & Bidwell, 2016). This design is suitable for evaluating the SWITCH Youth program due to the availability of monthly data on participating youth as well as input from multi-informants (i.e., outreach specialist, life coach, case manager, and clinical specialist). The use of diverse sources of data allows for a more comprehensive assessment of the program implementation.

Concurrent Mixed Methods Design

The primary purpose of choosing a concurrent mixed methods design in this evaluation is complementary (Haight & Bidwell, 2016). Insights obtained from both qualitative and

quantitative approaches are to generate a deeper, broader, and more comprehensive portrait of the SWITCH Youth program. Additionally, using both approaches to understand the program enables triangulation by strengthening the interpretation through the convergence of methods with complementary strengths and unique limitations. In concurrent mixed methods design of this program evaluation, the qualitative component involves in-depth analysis of interviews conducted with staff members to contextualize their experiences, insights, and perceptions regarding program delivery, interprofessional collaboration, and implementation challenges or facilitators. Concurrently, the quantitative component includes two sources of data: (1) survey data collected from staff members involved in the program implementation using the Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) that measures perceptions of collaboration within the interdisciplinary teams focusing on partnership, cooperation, and coordination and (2) secondary data on participating youth. Qualitative data is given greater weight, as the quantitative data is limited to descriptive analysis in the early phase of program implementation.

Qualitative Component: Data and Procedure

The qualitative component of this evaluation employed an ethnographic approach, which included non-participatory observation of staff members' routine education and training practices within the SWITCH Youth program, as well as individual interviews with staff members. Two authorized research members attended various meetings across different regions, including regional supervisor meetings, red flag meetings, group supervision sessions, and consultation meetings, over the course of one month in February 2024. This observation did not require consent from individual staff members. However, since the researchers were not present at every meeting, they announced their presence at the beginning of the meetings when they were in

attendance. The meetings occur weekly, either face-to-face or virtually. The non-participatory observation involved a total of 76 professionals in various roles, including leadership, supervisors, outreach specialists, life coaches, case managers, and clinical specialists. Unstructured field notes were completed by research team members in attendance at the meetings summarizing the context of the presentation and discussion, and interactions among professionals. The interview protocol was developed based on insights from non-participatory observations and in consultation with staff responsible for evaluating the Memphis Allies initiative. The interview protocol explored staff experiences with program implementation in relation to their roles and positions, their perceptions of key program components, strategies for engaging with youth and caregivers, challenges encountered in their roles, and the rewarding aspects of their work.

Recruitment of potential participants for individual interviews was initiated by Memphis Allies evaluation and operations staff. A flyer was distributed to all staff members involved in the SWITCH Youth program through internal Memphis Allies channels. Later, the research team also conducted direct recruitment during regular staff meetings, where team members explained the purpose of the evaluation and the expectations for staff participation in the individual interviews. The flyer was also handed out during these meetings. Staff members who were interested in participating in the individual interviews initially contacted the principal investigator (PI) of the research team via email or phone to schedule an interview. As the individual interview involved a survey that measures perceptions of collaboration withing the interdisciplinary teams, a questionnaire of the AITCS-II was also reviewed and slightly modified to reflect the context of the SWITCH Youth program implementation.

The semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted by four research members with twenty-one staff members who volunteered to share their perspectives and experiences in the program implementation process. Once participating staff members scheduled their interviews, the research team sent the participant a copy of the consent form and asked for the return of a signed copy prior to interview. A Qualtrics survey link for the AITCS-II was also sent to them for completion prior to the interviews. Both virtual interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams and in-person interviews at the Memphis Allies office were carried out. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and were audio/video recorded, with transcripts generated through Teams. Interview participants were provided a $20 Amazon e-gift card at the close of their interview. The research team requested staff participants' permission to contact them again if the research team needed further clarification of their responses.

Quantitative Component: Data and Procedure

Survey Data. Strong interprofessional team collaboration among outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, case managers, and leadership is one of the innovative features of the SWITCH Youth program that enhances positive outcomes through a holistic approach to supporting youth at risk of gun violence. The Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) (Orchard, 2015) was used to assess the extent to which professionals in the SWITCH Youth program collaborate effectively in three key constructs: Partnership, Cooperation, and Coordination (Orchard, 2018). The Partnership subscale measured the extent to which team members value each other's expertise and actively contribute to shared decision-making, using 16 items. Cooperation assessed the level of teamwork and collaborative effort among professionals to achieve shared program goals, using 16 items. Coordination refers

to the extent to which roles, responsibilities, and workflows are clearly defined and effectively integrated, using 7 items.

Secondary Data on Participating Youth. Deidentified data on youth participants in the SWITCH Youth program was provided monthly between January 2024 and December 2024 under the data sharing agreement with Youth Villages. The data includes demographic characteristics, referral sources, risk and need assessments, and information related to program involvement (e.g., age at enrollment, number of staff contacts, services received). It also includes the number of charges incurred prior to program enrollment across six offense types: violent offenses, weapon-related offenses, probation/court violations, theft, possession-related offenses, and other offenses. The December data additionally included the number of charges incurred during the youth's participation in the SWITCH Youth program. Although preliminary, these data allowed for a comparative analysis of charges incurred before and during program participation.

Mixed Methods Data Analysis

The mixed methods data analyses were conducted during the interpretation phase of the results. The results of qualitative and quantitative data analyses were merged to yield a more comprehensive understanding of the SWITCH Youth program implementation. The researchers examined the extent to which the qualitative and quantitative results confirmed each other, establishing a coherent portrayal of the program's implementation. First, the qualitative interview data was analyzed to explore the overall program contexts as well as strengths and areas for improvement in the SWITCH Youth program implementation process through participating staff members' experiences, insights, and perceptions. Next, two sets of quantitative data were analyzed to assess the extent of interdisciplinary team collaboration, youth program

involvement, and changes in their behavioral functioning. These quantitative findings offered measurable indicators to complement the qualitative interpretations. Specific analysis strategies for qualitative and quantitative data are as follows.

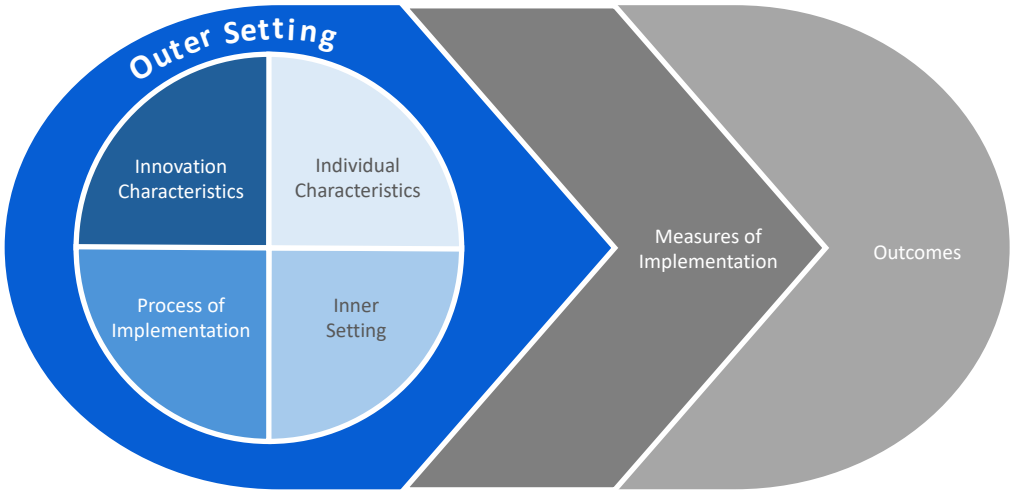
Qualitative Data Analysis

Consolidated Framework for Intervention Research (CFIR). The qualitative data analysis in this evaluation adapted the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) as a practice model suited for complex and unique systems intervention research. The CFIR functions as a deterministic framework for labeling and defining theoretical constructs (Nilsen, 2024). The CFIR helps evaluators assess the effectiveness of program implementation within a specific context. The framework identifies contextual factors that may hinder (barriers) or facilitate (facilitators) sustained positive outcomes (Damschroder et al., 2020). As barriers and facilitators to effective implementation are identified, analysis guided by the CFIR provides insights into how interventions can be successfully implemented, sustained, and evaluated. The CFIR is often adapted to fit the specific context of the intervention or program being evaluated. It consists of five domains that describe the internal and external contexts of program implementation (Damschroder et al., 2020). The original framework includes thirty-nine constructs across five domains; however, existing evaluation research has varied in the number and selection of constructs identified (Damschroder et al., 2022). The five domains are: (1) Intervention Characteristics, (2) Inner Setting, (3) Outer Setting, (4) Characteristics of Individuals, and (5) Process of Implementation. Innovation characteristics refers to the features of the intervention that contribute to positive outcomes such as evidence strength, adaptability, and complexity. Inner setting encompasses the organizational structure, culture, and readiness for implementation within the implementing organization. Outer setting refers to the broader context

surrounding the organization or program being implemented. It includes external factors such as policies, funding environments, and community needs. Characteristics of individuals focus on the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals involved in the program implementation. Lastly, process of implementation refers to the steps and activities taken to plan, execute, and evaluate the implementation of a program that shape how program implementation unfolds over time (Damschroder et al., 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the implementation context of the SWITCH Youth program through the CFIR domains and constructs, including innovation characteristics, inner and outer settings, individual characteristics, and process.

Figure 1

The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) on the SWITCH Youth Program Evaluation



Source: Adapted from Rojas-Smith et al., 2014

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using AI transcription software available through Microsoft Teams. All identifying information was omitted or replaced with fake identifiers. The transcribed interviews were reviewed by research team members to ensure accuracy and to incorporate non-verbal cues and nuances. A hybrid of inductive and deductive

strategies was applied in the analysis process (Vanover et al., 2021). Directed content analysis was employed by applying a pre-existing framework, CFIR, to guide and structure the emergent codes (Stemler, 2015). First, the qualitative analysis began with an inductive pilot coding process. Three researchers conducted a pilot coding process in which each member reviewed seven different interview transcripts and identified emergent codes. This initial coding process allowed the researchers to become familiar with the data and to capture themes grounded in participants' narratives, without the use of a pre-existing framework. From the pilot coding process, the team developed a preliminary codebook encompassing the emergent codes and relevant contextual factors influencing program implementation. In the second round of the coding process, the team introduced the CFIR to structure the identified codes and enhance theoretical grounding. The research team engaged in ongoing discussions to clarify the codes and address negative cases until consensus was reached. Through the discussions, the previously identified codes were reorganized and mapped onto the five domains of the CFIR. A total of twenty constructs in the five domains of the CFIR were identified to contextualize the SWITCH Youth program implementation, reflecting both potential barriers and facilitators. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretations of participants' responses, several strategies were employed, including peer debriefing with experts in juvenile justice, social work, and qualitative research methods, as well as member-checking with three staff participants in different roles.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the demographic and program involvement characteristics of youth participants, as well as their charge records prior to and during the program participation. Descriptive statistics were also employed to examine the

demographic and professional backgrounds of staff participants and the level of interdisciplinary team collaboration on AITCS-II among the staff participants.

Additionally, a series of fixed-effects regression analyses were conducted to examine changes in youths' behavioral functioning by comparing charge counts before and during program participation. Analyses were performed for the total number of charges, as well as across six charge categories: violent offenses, weapon-related offenses, probation/court violations, theft, possession-related offenses, and other offenses. To account for differences in exposure to intervention services, the analysis controlled for length of program participation. Due to the homogeneity in demographic characteristics, additional control variables were not included in the analysis, as there was insufficient variation to meaningfully account for their effects.

Ethical Considerations

This evaluation research underwent university IRB review. Youth Villages required a data use agreement and IRB approval prior to the release of data on youth participants in the SWITCH Youth program. The original youth-level data were drawn from Youth Villages' data systems. Memphis Allies evaluation staff created the de-identified dataset for this evaluation research by using an identification code for individual cases. This prevented identification of participating youth. The data files were shared via a secure channel and kept on a password-protected external hard drive and opened on PI's password protected office laptop.

For the qualitative interview, voluntary participation was an important issue to consider. Information was obtained through non-participatory observation and individual interviews, with the utmost respect for the privacy and autonomy of staff participants. Participants were informed about the program evaluation by Memphis Allies leadership, who explained the purpose of the

study, the types of information being collected by the research team, and the voluntary nature of participation prior to any data collection. The research team also provided them with the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification regarding their involvement in the research. Interactions between the research team and SWITCH Youth staff members primarily occurred during regular meetings for consultant and supervision practices, either face-to-face or virtually, which were controlled environments conducive to privacy and confidentiality based on the organization's policies and regulations. Only authorized research members attended these regular meetings, which were scheduled at the beginning of the evaluation period and were subject to Memphis Allies' agreement. The research team collected minimum amount of information necessary to fulfill the objectives of the study, focusing solely on the intervention implementation practices and experiences discussed during the regular meetings. Data collection during non-participatory observation did not include reporting of individual staff members identities and individual staff member names were not collected as part of the observations.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using AI transcription software available through Microsoft Teams, and the transcripts were accessible only to the interviewer on the research team. For interview data, the research team used pseudo names or fake identifiers. Once the transcript was complete, all identifying information, including names, was omitted or replaced with fake identifiers. Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, with only recurring themes reported in aggregate form to protect participant confidentiality. To further safeguard against identification, individual stories or comments that did not align with broader, repeated themes were excluded from reporting.

As an external evaluation research, the research team worked closely with Memphis Allies to ensure that all communications with program staff were initiated by designated

gatekeeper staff in a respectful and non-intrusive manner. In addition, PI regularly communicated with the grant coordinators from Violent Crime Intervention Fund in the Memphis Police Department to discuss reporting requirements and provide updates on the progress of the evaluation.

A commitment to protecting participants' privacy remained paramount throughout all stages of the research. The research team continuously monitored and updated our privacy protection strategies as needed to ensure compliance with ethical standards and regulatory requirements, as well as to safeguard the confidentiality and well-being of our participants. Any information collected was securely stored and maintained in accordance with applicable data protection regulations. Any publications resulting from this evaluation research will present findings in aggregate form to protect participant confidentiality.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Results From Qualitative Analysis

Table 1 presents information on the demographics and the personal and professional backgrounds of the twenty-one staff members who participated in the qualitative interviews. Of the 21 staff members, 38% (n = 8) held supervisory roles. The majority of participants were female (n = 16, 76%) and identified as Black (n = 14, 67%), with varied educational backgrounds and licensure status. While most had less than two years of experience in the SWITCH Youth program (n = 17, 81%), several brought substantial prior experience in related fields, reflecting a wide range of professional and lived expertise.

Discussions with participating staff about their experiences and perspectives on SWITCH Youth implementation revealed various constructs aligned with the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR). A thematic analysis of qualitative interviews with SWITCH Youth staff of various positions identified twenty constructs, including five constructs in the Innovation Characteristics domain, five constructs in the Inner Setting domain, two constructs in the Outer Setting domain, four constructs in the Characteristics of Individuals domain, and four constructs in the Process domain. Each domain identified both specific facilitators and barriers to the program's successful implementation as related to the domain construct. Table 2 presents the constructs and relevant themes organized within each domain in the context of SWITCH Youth implementation.

1. Innovation Characteristics

Innovation characteristics are attributes of the intervention that may affect its success (Damschroder et al., 2020). In this context the intervention is the SWITCH Youth program. The

innovative characteristics include factors such as the program's adaptability, complexity, perceived benefits, and compatibility with the needs of youth participants. For this evaluation, participants include Memphis youth involved in violent crime. Damschroder et al. (2020) demonstrate that these attributes or characteristics of the intervention play a critical role in determining how well the intervention can be integrated into practice, sustained over time, and achieve its intended outcomes. In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, understanding characteristics like the program's adaptability and perceived benefits can help identity strengths and potential barriers of the program and guide necessary modifications to enhance program success and sustainability.

Staff that participated in qualitative interviews highlighted the unique and innovative features of the program characteristics. Five constructs related to unique program characteristics were identified: 1a. Encompassing evidence-based approaches, 1b. Transformative impact of lived experience, 1c. Outreach, 1d. Relentless engagement, and 1e. Team building and collaboration. A total of eleven facilitators and one barrier emerged under these five constructs. Facilitators are characteristics of the program that assist in its effective operation in serving its participants. Barriers are aspects of the program that detract from the program's effective operation. The ten identified facilitators indicate the staff's perceptions of positive intervention characteristics that align with the needs of the targeted youth and the capacities of the context in which the intervention is being implemented. The five constructs and emerging facilitators under each of those constructs are detailed below.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Qualitative Study Participants (N = 21)

ID	Age	Sex	Race	Education	License	# of yrs in SWITCH Youth	# of yrs in relevant field
01	40 - 49	Female	White	Master	Yes	Less than 2 yrs	18 yrs
02	30 - 39	Female	Black	Master	None	2 yrs	11 yrs
03	30 - 39	Female	White	Master	Yes	1 yr	2 yrs
04	*	Male	Hispanic	Some college	None	Less than 1 yr	5 yrs
05	Under 30	Female	Biracial	Master	Yes	Less than 1 yr	2 yrs
06	40 - 49	Female	Black	Some college	None	Less than 1 yr	20 yrs
07	30 - 39	Male	Black	Some college	None	Less than 1 yr	None
08	Under 30	Female	Biracial	BA	None	2 yrs	None
09	40 - 49	Male	Black	Some college	None	Less than 2 yrs	20 yrs
10	30 - 39	Male	Native American	High School	None	1 yr	1 yr
11	40 - 49	Male	Black	None	None	Less than 1 yr	1 yr
12	MS	Female	Black	Some college	None	Less than 2 yrs	1.5 yrs
13	30 - 39	Female	Black	None	None	2 yrs	2 yrs
14	Under 30	Female	Black	Master	Yes	1 yr	3 yrs
15	30 - 39	Male	Black	BA	None	1 yr	2 yrs
16	30 - 39	Female	Black	Master	Yes	1 yr	None
17	40 - 49	Female	Black	BA	None	Less than 1 yr	MS
18	40 - 49	Female	Black	Some college	None	Less than 1 yr	None
19	30 - 39	Female	Black	BA	None	1 yr	8 yrs
20	40 - 49	Female	Black	Some college	None	Less than 1 yr	None
21	40 - 49	Female	Black	Master	None	Less than 1 yr	10 yrs

*Chose not to disclose; MS: Missing

Table 2

SWITCH Youth Coding Consensus

Guiding Framework: Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR)

CFIR Domain	SWITCH Youth	Facilitators and Barriers to Implementation	
	Relevant Codes	**Facilitators**	**Barriers**
I. Innovation Characteristics	1a. Encompassing evidence-based approaches	1a-F1. Evidence strength and quality	1a-B1. Adjustments needed in implementation targeting youth
	1b. Transformative impact of lived experience	1b-F2. Deeper connections to the community	
		1b-F3. Relatability and trust-building with youth and families	
	1c. Outreach	1c-F4. Meeting youth where they are at	
		1c-F5. Intermediate phase before formal enrollment	
	1d. Relentless engagement	1d-F6. Emphasis on relationships, connection, and belonging	
		1d-F7. Importance of involving the entire family system	
		1d-F8. Natural positive opportunities	
		1d-F9. Social media check	
		1d-F10. Youth safety and environment	
	1e. Team building and collaboration	1e-F11. Multidisciplinary collaboration and coordinated roles	

CFIR Domain	Relevant Codes	Facilitators	Barriers
II. Inner Setting	2a. Organizational readiness for implementation		2a-B1. Need for more structure
			2a-B2. Role ambiguity
			2a-B3. Challenges with staff turnover and position changes
	2b. Leadership engagement	2b-F1. Leadership adaptability	
		2b-F2. Relational leadership	
	2c. Available resources	2c-F3. Various, on-going staff trainings	2c-B4. Few trainings tailored to staff roles
	2d. Structured communication framework	2d-F4. Regular meetings for fostering collaboration and ongoing progress	2d-B5. Lack of transparency in information sharing
			2d-B6. Power dynamics in open communication
	2e. Culture	2e-F5. Mental wellness support for staff	2e-B7. Staff safety concern
			2e-B8. Staff burnout issues
CFIR Domain	**Relevant Codes**	**Facilitators**	**Barriers**
III. Outer Setting	3a. Community resources and strategic partnerships	3a-F1. Deep connections to Memphis communities	3a-B1. Need for early identification of high-risk youth
			3a-B2. Need for long-term follow up after the intervention
	3b. External policies and incentives		3b-B3. Youth stipend
			3b-B4. More spaces for youth
			3b-B5. Youth employment
			3b-B6. Housing issues
			3b-B7. Limited access and more educations about firearms

CFIR Domain	Relevant Codes	Facilitators	Barriers
IV. Characteristics of Individuals	4a. Individual knowledge and beliefs about engagement with youth, families, and community	4a-F1. Identity as a community member	
		4a-F2. Speak to youth from experience	
		4a-F3. Diverse lived experience and expertise	
	4b. Personal strategies for engagement with youth and families	4c-F4. Being person centered	4c-B1. Caregiver engagement challenges
		4c-F5. Coming in disarmed	4c-B2. Mistrust and resistance
		4c-F6. Consistent and persistent engagement	4c-B3. Boundary-setting difficulties
		4c-F7. Non-judgmental listening	
		4c-F8. Focus on their "why"	
	4c. Personal resilience and coping	4c-F9. Mental health care	
		4c-F10. Personal well-being	
	4d. Reflection on rewarding experiences	4d-F11. Observing youth progress	
		4d-F12. Professional Growth and Reflection	

CFIR Domain	Relevant Codes	Facilitators	Barriers
V. Process of Implementation	5a. Rapid growth and expansion of the program	5a-F1. Foundational role of the SWITCH model	5a-B1. Adjusting to an evolving program
			5a-B2. Excessive amount of documentation requirements
			5a-B3. Financial and logistical struggles for staff
			5a-B4. Disruptions in continuity of care
	5b. Referral system		5b-B5. Balancing court mandates and youth engagement
	5c. On-going reflection on program effectiveness measures	5c-F2. Frontline workers' value	5c-B6. Need for long-term tracking on youth outcomes 5c-B6-1. Input from youth participants and their families 5c-B6-2. Level of engagement 5c-B6-3. Prosocial activities 5c-B6-4. School enrollment 5c-B6-5. Successful program graduation 5c-B6-6. Recidivism rates 5c-B6-7. Safe, alive, and out of jail
		5c-F3. Building trust and on-going communication among staff	
	5d. Ethical concerns in youth work		5d-B7. Lack of awareness on ethical issues and ethical training

1a. Encompassing Evidence-Based Approaches

Discussions among the participating staff indicated SWITCH Youth was designed and built based on empirical evidence. The program draws on several evidence-based models that have demonstrated effectiveness, including Intercept, LifeSet, Multisystemic Therapy (MST), and GuideTree, and was informed by an extensive review of other community violence intervention (CVI) programs conducted by the agency prior to the development of Memphis Allies and the design of the SWITCH Youth program. In this construct, one facilitator and one barrier were identified.

Facilitator

1a-F1. Evidence strength and Quality. All participating staff believed that the SWITCH Youth program is effective, clearly demonstrating the strengths and qualities of the SWITCH Youth program that have resulted in positive outcomes for youth and families. They were aware that the program is based on evidence-based models and suggest this assists in its effectiveness in supporting at risk youth and families.

> *"The GuideTree developed after we were able to have Intercept and LifeSet approved as an effective based service and then when we started working with other partners outside of Youth Villages to replicate those models, they also needed a way to access the tools that are part of treatment conceptualization, and intervention. So we developed GuideTree as basically an app through the computer where anyone that's licensed to use our models as well as Youth Villages staff, can go in there and get assistance with their treatment conceptualization using the fishbone model. And then through that leads them to kind of a rabbit trail of lots of evidence-based interventions that have been approved for services."*

Barrier

1a-B1. Adjustments needed to program tools. The staff's discussions also identified unique features of the program that may require adjustments for better implementation. Some of the established practices from existing models may not be well-suited to the needs of the youth

served by the SWITCH Youth program. They highlighted that the prescribed services and traditional lens of understanding their needs do not fully resonate with the familiar cultural context of the youth. For example, the staff suggested they may not benefit from traditional practices like journaling among the many recommendations provided in GuideTree, a program adopted for use for SWITCH Youth.

> *"Some of them are OK. I don't think it applies to our clientele, because our clientele is really a specialized group. And, like I said, they don't want to journal and you are making me doing this per the GuideTree. No. This group of kids don't want to do journaling. If they do journaling, they're rapping. They're writing their rap lyrics, not journaling their feelings. Now they may do a different coping skill, but it's not that. You want me to use GuideTree for these kids for a year. There's nothing on this GuideTree to keep them occupied for me a year. There's nothing on this GuideTree to do that."*

1b. Transformative impact of lived experience

Lived experience among the staff members connecting with youth was heavily emphasized in the staff's discussion. They believed that it plays a paramount role in the success of the SWITCH Youth program. Many staff members, particularly outreach specialists and life coaches, leverage their own lived experiences to establish deeper connections with the community. They demonstrated that sharing experiences with the youth, such as coming from similar backgrounds and facing similar challenges, facilitates trust and understanding between them and the youth and the youths' families. Within this construct, two facilitators were identified.

Facilitators

1b-F2. Deeper connections to the community. The participating staff described the community-based approach as the key to the program. Staff members who come from the same neighborhoods or share similar personal histories with youth create a strong foundation for engagement and support in the community. Their discussions highlighted how their lived

experiences are better equipped to connect with the youth, as they are still embedded in the same communities and understand the dynamics of subcultures. In particular, the outreach specialists play a critical role in acting as the eyes and ears of the community informing other staff about safety concerns, hotspots, and emerging issues in the youth's environment. Their knowledge of the streets and local dynamics adds another layer of value to the program's success.

> *"They're individuals that have similar lived experience, that are still connected to the communities, to the organizations group, gangs, cliques-- however, you define them—that are still in those communities, that can really help identify and then start that relationship building piece."*

1b-F3. Relatability and trust-building with youth and families. Staff members who have lived through similar situations are seen as more relatable and credible by the youth and their families. This is crucial when working with youth who may be resistant to authority figures or unfamiliar intervention methods. The staff with lived experience used their stories not only as a means of relatability but also as a tool for trust-building. The staff highlighted building trust was vital to youth engagement. When they establish trust with youth, youth are more likely open up about their experiences and make progress towards achieving their goals.

> *"I think our outreach program is extremely effective at identifying those high-risk individuals, especially with their street credibility and their knowledge of the city and them being able to connect dots and really get an understanding of their peer group and they also have that relatability piece to where they don't seem as if they're just another staff trying to, you know, tell the kids what they can and cannot do with their lives. They're really effective at like appearing as one of them and in portraying their group in that way.*"

1c. Outreach

Outreach was a highly cited construct within the Innovation Characteristic domain. Participating staff identified the outreach component as serving as the foundation for the SWITCH Youth program. Outreach specialists play a vital role in identifying and engaging high-risk youth by leveraging street credibility and local knowledge to build trust and rapport before

therapeutic interventions. Outreach specialists provide consistent support, gradually transitioning youth into more structured services in the SWITCH Youth program. They leverage their understanding of the youth's environment, peer groups, and challenges to effectively engage with them. Their shared experiences with youth make the program less intimidating and more approachable for youth. Within this construct, two facilitators were identified, meeting youth where they are at and an intermediate phase before formal enrollment.

Facilitators

1c-F4. Meeting youth where they are at. The staff often described "Meeting youth where they are at" as a guiding principle. As aligned with the therapeutic relationship principle, the staff's perception on the relationship with youth emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging youth in their current emotional, social, and environmental context, rather than imposing external expectations or prescribed interventions. The principle of "Meeting youth where they are at" is not only about physically being in the community where the youth feel comfortable, but also about providing a supportive relationship that is empathetic and empowering.

> *"The most beneficial thing is our ability to connect with the youth where they're at. We don't have to bring them into a hospital. We don't have to bring them into an office. We can go on the corner where they're at, where they're most comfortable, and we're able to do our work in that way."*

1c-F5. Intermediate phase before formal enrollment. The staff discussed that outreach activities act as a critical steppingstone in the SWITCH Youth program. Through active outreach, youth are gradually introduced to the program's services, which prepares them for more structured interventions. This transitional phase helps ensure that youth are not overwhelmed and feel comfortable with the staff and services provided, though the phase is still

being developed to more clearly define its purpose and role. As they are participating voluntarily, this phase helps youth foster motivation and readiness for long-term involvement.

> *"Active outreach will actively go out and they'll have their coordinators go into these areas that have multiple reports of kids having a conflict in that area. And you know, they'll talk to them, they'll say, hey, you know, they're telling them about the program. They'll build a good relationship with them. They'll bring them in a little bit and then when they are ready, we'll do a handoff with whatever life coach and clinical specialist they're assigned to."*

1d. Relentless engagement

All staff participating in the interviews highlighted relentless engagement as the key to program success and discussed several strategies to achieve it including 1) emphasis on relationships, connection, and belonging, 2) importance of involving the entire family system, 3) natural positive opportunities, 4) social media check, and 5) youth safety and environment. Based on their discussions, relentless engagement can be defined as the continuous, consistent, and proactive efforts of staff to build and maintain meaningful relationships with youth and families. The strategies for relentless engagement work together to create a supportive, consistent, and holistic environment for youth. Each strategy emphasizes a different aspect of youth engagement, whether through relationship-building**,** caregiver/family involvement, or ensuring youth safety and community support. This continuous effort to stay connected and supportive makes it clear that the program's commitment to youth is ongoing, offering both structured and organic opportunities for engagement that address the individual needs of each youth. Five strategies were described as facilitators under this construct.

Facilitators

1d-F6. Emphasis on relationships, connection, and belonging. The staff demonstrated the program's focus on building authentic connections with youth by prioritizing relationships and creating an environment where youth feel a sense of belonging. Relentless engagement was

described as going beyond merely providing services. They believe that when youth feel supported and know that others care, it motivates them to keep working toward their goals, which is a key aspect of relentless engagement.

> "*The relationship is the intervention. The relationship is key. It is the core intervention. Relationships change individuals, they change the community. For me, that is why the life coach piece is so critical because it's having a strong relationship with a safe adult who almost implicitly understands me and where I'm coming from.*"

1d-F7. Importance of involving the entire family system. The staff recognized that youth are part of a broader family system that influences their behaviors, attitudes, and progress in the SWITCH Youth program. Relentless engagement extends beyond the youth themselves. They strived to ensure that caregivers are part of the support system for youth. Including family members in the engagement process can create a more comprehensive support system for the youth.

> "*Obviously, I truly think most of these caregivers care about the outcome and well-being of that young person we're working with. So, we've spent a lot of time talking to like how we're trying to help keep them safe and what we're providing them. So, I think those are the general strategies, but it is really hard to get caregiver involvement."*

1d-F8. Natural positive opportunities. The staff shared how they leverage everyday situations and natural interactions as opportunities to engage with youth. Their discussions highlighted that engagement extends beyond formal sessions. Their discussions on its approach emphasize creating meaningful opportunities within daily moments that align with youths' existing passions, fostering engagement and promoting positive change.

> *"I think the way we successfully change the mindset is through identifying what is this young person naturally good at and naturally interested in and how are we the bridge to providing that positive opportunity because a lot of what drives, I think violence in our community, obviously it's poverty and lack of resources, but it's equitable opportunities t the positive things and all of that's connected."*

1d-F9. Social media check. The staff further discussed social media checks as an essential component of relentless engagement. They stated how the program stays engaged with the youth's activities and behavior, even outside of formal sessions. By monitoring social media, outreach specialists and life coaches can provide real-time support and address concerns as they arise.

> "*Another thing that I have seen being the most effective are the social media checks. Umm anybody in the program would tell you I can definitely find a social media, but when these kids are going through things they do not wanna tell a stranger, they will just post it online sometimes*."

1d-F10. Youth safety and environment. The staff recognized that youth safety, both within the program and in their broader environment, is essential to sustaining engagement. When youth feel safe and supported, they are more likely to participate actively in the program. Relentless engagement goes hand-in-hand with ensuring that youth's environments are conducive to their growth. By prioritizing youth safety, the program helps minimize external factors that could lead to disengagement or resistance.

> "*So we do all of those things. We're on the safety rail of things. We know our kids carry weapons or they have weapons in the home. If a caregiver has a weapon at home and there's maybe like kids at home or something, we provide lock boxes, lock it up. But for the most part like basically be safe."*."

1e. Team building and collaboration

Lastly, staff's discussions about the characteristics of the SWITCH Youth program reflected that effective collaboration and team building are foundational to the success of the program. Interviewed staff believed that the consistent collaboration between outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, and leadership helps build a holistic approach, ensuring all aspects of a youth's needs are meet effectively. One facilitator was identified within this construct.

Facilitator

1e-F11. Multidisciplinary collaboration and coordinated roles. The structure of the SWITCH Youth program is designed to ensure a coordinated approach among multidisciplinary teams, including outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, and supervisors. Relentless engagement involves a holistic approach where multiple perspectives and expertise are brought to the table. Staff shared that their collaborative efforts create a unified approach, where professionals bring their unique expertise together to comprehensively address the needs of youth with care and support. Their discussions highlighted how the staff actively engage in problem-solving together, brainstorming solutions and collaborating on how to best support the youth.

> "*We all come together as a team. The clinical team and the life coach team come together and we discuss all of the cases on our team, and we try to find viable solutions and fill in the gaps where someone else may have missed something. Another person's idea would be, "OK, let's try it this way", right? And so we go through those different methods So yeah, we do a lot of discussions*."

2. Inner Setting

The inner setting refers to the structural, political, and cultural contexts in which the program is implemented (Damschroder et al., 2020). To be specific, the information about the inner setting includes structural characteristics in an organization, the nature and quality of social networks and communications, culture (e.g., norm, values, and basic assumptions of a given organization), readiness for implementation, and implementation climate (e.g., relative priority, organizational incentives and rewards, goals and feedback, and learning climate). Damschroder et al. (2020) explain that the inner setting is critical in understanding how a program functions and how effectively it can be delivered to the target population. In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, the inner setting refers to internal factors that shape and influence how the program is implemented. Discussions from the participating staff revealed five constructs of the

inner setting that play a significant role in shaping its effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability: 2a. Organizational readiness for implementation, 2b. Leadership engagement, 2c. Available resources, 2d. Structured communication framework, and 2e. Culture. Within the five constructs, a total of five facilitators and eight barriers were identified within the five constructs.

2a. Organizational readiness for implementation

Organizational readiness indicates the internal capacity and conditions Memphis Allies possesses to effectively implement and sustain the SWITCH Youth program. Organizational readiness is more than just having a process in place. It is about the organizational culture**,** staff roles**,** coordination, and internal stability that all support the program's delivery (Damschroder et al., 2020). Despite Memphis Allies' prior experience with similar initiatives and their access to resources and community partnerships, staff revealed several barriers to implementing the SWITCH Youth program. While the existing assets of Memphis Allies allowed them to transition into the youth program, the early stage of implementation and the unique needs of the target population require time and effort to make necessary adjustments. Within this construct, three barriers were identified.

Barriers

2a-B1. Need for more structure. Participating staff shared their challenges in navigating how tasks are managed and how program elements are delivered. Clear operational structures and more defined processes are critical components for the successful implementation of the intervention. In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, the staff highlighted the need for these frameworks and processes, which had not yet been fully developed, as they were still in the early stages of program implementation.

> "*I would just think that it would be a more structured way to go about it rather than kind of like treating everybody as a case by case, you know situation.*

> *Because there's some people who need help with deposits. There's some people who are homeless who need assistance with getting, you know, into another situation. Some people are trying to avoid eviction. Some people, their homes just got shot up and they have no money to relocate but home is unsafe. So it's like to what degree are we gonna address what and what exactly do we plan on prioritizing*?"

2a-B2. Role ambiguity. The SWITCH Youth staff shared challenges related to the organization's lack of clear definitions about staff's roles and responsibilities. Role ambiguity can present a significant challenge in the implementation process, as it affects clarity in responsibilities and coordination among the staff members. The staff acknowledged that roles, such as life coaches and clinical specialists, may sometimes overlap, particularly when staffing is limited. However, they emphasized an understanding of boundaries and expertise within their respective positions. While they recognized that the program is still in its early stages and that interdisciplinary collaboration is a key component, they remained aware of the role ambiguity to some extent.

> "*So with me being a clinical specialist and a caseload of nine, although I have eight, I have the most of everyone. I don't have time to be calling these people on the phone. That's what the life coaches are for. But when I try to do something that's associated with a life coach's job, I'm stopped. Well, sometimes the jobs will overlap. Some things that my life coach may not be able to tell our youth because he's a male and they need a woman's perspective. So when I intertwine that with the intervention that I have already scheduled, I get feedback of, you know, you're not supposed to do this. Well, you can't separate it. You can't separate independent living skills from interventions. So it's a lot. It's a lot. And a lot of things need to be tweaked and changed.*"

2a-B3. Challenges with staff turnover and position changes. The staff further demonstrated challenges with staff turnover and frequent position changes amongst staff (e.g., staff were promoted up as the program grew leaving entry positions vacant). High turnover can exacerbate role ambiguity and the lack of operational structure, as frequent changes make it difficult to establish staffing stability. The staff expressed concerns that this issue could

ultimately undermine program continuity and effectiveness, as it also disrupts youth engagement with the program and their trust with the staff.

> "*We build the relationship with this child. And you know we're spending time with them. Of course, we're documenting our sessions and typically what they're about. And then all of a sudden, we tell them, "Hey, another person is coming in to basically do what we've already done to cover the ground that we've already covered" and that person is a life coach. So now, they [youth] are meeting, in most cases, a stranger. So now they have to open up to that stranger again. They have to get comfortable with them again. They have to, you know, connect with them before they can share a lot of the things that they've already shared, like a lot of the ground that we covered in those months or that previous year, life coach is basically starting out all the way from scratch.*"

2b. Leadership engagement

The staff, including leadership, discussed how leadership engagement has evolved and influenced the implementation of the SWITCH Youth program. Leadership engagement refers to the active involvement, commitment, and support of leadership in the implementation process of the SWITCH Youth program. How leaders actively promote and sustain the program, as well as how their actions shape the organization's readiness for change, is a cornerstone of success. Their discussions highlighted that leaders who adapt their approach based on the needs of their staff while fostering strong, positive relationships help ensure the program remains responsive, effective, and sustainable. Their influence extends to resource allocation, team dynamics, community partnerships, and the long-term sustainability of the program. Two facilitators were identified within this construct.

Facilitators

2b-F1. Leadership adaptability. Discussion of the staff in leadership position reflected how their roles have evolved adjusting to the needs of the team and program. For example, as the SWITCH Youth program involves different professionals in various roles, the leader adjusted their leadership style from a directive to a more collaborative approach. Their ability to shift

between these approaches demonstrates a key leadership skill in adapting to different circumstances and team dynamics. Leadership adaptability is essential in the SWITCH Youth program, where flexibility and collaboration are crucial for effective implementation.

> "*And so I think my leadership style has grown from a more like direct structured because I tend to be a little type A myself - into also allowing people the freedom to go and lead in the way that works for them, that may be different from me, but to achieve their goals and achieve their results in the way that they know best. So my leadership style is: 'Are we on the same page with what our goals are? Are we on the same page with what we're trying to achieve'? You're in your position because you have a skill set to meet those goals, so go and meet them."*

2b-F2. Relational leadership. Most leadership involved in the SWITCH Youth program emphasized a personal commitment to relationship development. Their discussion highlighted how leadership is not just about setting goals and expectations but about making time for genuine connections with staff members. The intentional effort to spend time with staff in their office and engage in personal conversations reflected leadership's role in fostering trust, understanding, and a supportive work environment in the SWITCH Youth program. As the human element of leadership (Lansing et al., 2023), the personal commitment to strong staff relationships is essential to creating a culture of collaboration and mutual respect.

> "*This is very, very relational work. Like sure, when you think about service delivery, it's all relational. I've done different types of mental health social work jobs, but this is way more relational than any of them. And so, umm, I intentionally spend time in all of our offices just sitting and talking to people, even though the lists of things to do may be really long. Like I have individual relationships with every single staff, like no matter what I'm going to make sure I spend time doing that.* "

2c. Available resources

Discussions about training and education for staff took place under the larger subject of available resources in the inner setting of the SWITCH Youth program. Available resources, particularly staff training, focused on the skills, knowledge, and tools provided to enable staff to implement the program effectively. These resources are designed to prepare and support the staff

in executing their roles successfully. One facilitator and one barrier were identified within this construct.

Facilitator

2c-F3. Various, on-going staff trainings. The staff shared the various training sessions they received while implementing the SWITCH Youth program. Memphis Allies provides staff with a range of training opportunities to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage effectively in the program. Training for SWITCH Youth staff includes Community Violence Intervention (CVI), CPR, suicide prevention, overdose prevention, and conflict management, to name a few. The staff believed that the availability of training programs and educational resources for tools and materials (e.g., GuideTree and documentation skills) utilized in the program implementation supports the day-to-day implementation of the program.

> *"There are continuous trainings. We do life coach trainings every Tuesday. Then we have trainings throughout the whole, like we have time management trainings, it's continuous. Trainings, trainings, trainings. And we have supervisory training on social styles, for [inaudible] bosses. So, um, we have a lot of trainings, so it's a lot of trying to support something, whatever you need or you feel that you need to be developing, there's a training for. So we are constantly observing the team and then we see where there might be a lack and then go over the barriers of the lack and then from there we're gonna go, OK, we'll assess what we'll put you in this training so they have the ability to develop the skillset. Soo yeah, it's a lot of trainings, continuous training."*

Barrier

2c-B4. Few trainings tailored to staff roles. Despite the various ongoing training sessions and educational resources available to staff, discussions among participating staff highlighted the need for additional training, particularly specialized training tailored to their roles. As the SWITCH Youth program involves different professionals in various roles, it is clear that, as the program grows, defining and maintaining these roles is critical to avoid confusion, duplication of efforts, and burnout. The staff described that the current trainings were limited to

basic administrative skills and general safety. The lack of trainings leaves staff underprepared for the dynamic aspects of their roles. Staff's discussion on the trainings collectively identified the gap in specialized training for staff roles within the SWITCH Youth program, particularly around engaging with families, managing youth behavior, handling complex situations, and ethical considerations in their practice.

> "*So, but once you have an ability, when we go over documentation, we see the engagement and then we figure out, ok, in this situation, this is what you could do, another way, you could handle this situation this way and so what we use is action based. So, I think more… I would say, if there was a training, it would be the life coach training, the life coach training is good because it deals with the engagement of resistant situations like that where you come up with new resistance and how to handle yourself in certain situations."*

2d. Structured communication framework

In discussing the effective collaboration of the SWITCH Youth program, the staff highlighted the importance of the formal or informal opportunities for communication among staff members and other professionals involved in their practice. Memphis Allies has created various meetings, including prospect/active outreach, red flag, team/group supervision, and individual supervision/development meetings, with the intent to facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations and better understanding of the cases through constant dialogue and support among staff. All participating staff emphasized the importance of a structured communication framework, where leadership and staff members meet to share updates, discuss challenges, and brainstorm solutions. This construct consists of one facilitator and two barriers.

Facilitator

2d-F4. Regular meetings for fostering collaboration and ongoing progress.

Participating staff discussed how they strived to understand the reasons behind challenges in the program and were better positioned to adapt it to meet youth needs and address any barriers to success. The regular meetings for staff implementing the SWITCH Youth program intend to

maintain open lines of communication and collective intelligence to ensure that staff share best practices and stay aligned in their practice to youth engagement and support.

> "*So we have red flag meetings where it's leadership only and we discuss updates, progress, struggles, all the good things with our kiddos. Then we have a meeting where everyone is on the call with me virtually or in person. But everyone is on a call, and we discuss as a team. So the first meeting that I talked about was leadership only and as a team we will come together and we discuss progress, struggles, updates, things like that as a team, and we brainstorm together.*"

Barriers

2d-B5. Lack of transparency in information sharing. Barriers to effective collaboration among staff also emerged in their discussions. Some staff members pointed to a lack of transparency in information sharing, particularly when they were required to adapt to changes in the program structure and delivery procedures. This lack of transparency can hinder their ability to make informed decisions in their day-to-day work with youth and families in high-stakes situations. They described how top-down changes often occurs with little communication or context. In these cases, they felt that leadership withheld certain information and did not always communicate the reasoning behind decisions, leaving them in the dark about why specific actions were being taken.

> "*Changes almost always come from somebody at the top deciding to randomly pull this piece of data, they didn't like what they saw from this randomly pulled piece of data, that maybe was badly collected anyway, and now we're just getting an email saying, "You all have to do this thing this way now because you did it badly before.*"

2d-B6. Power dynamics in open communication. The staff further identified a barrier in communication structures at the inner setting of the SWITCH Youth program. Although the diverse communication structures within the SWITCH Youth program help ensure staff alignment, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and maintain engagement with the program's goals, some staff members believed that they are less responsive to power dynamics. Such

structures may not fully account for differences in authority, decision-making influence, or the ability of frontline staff to voice concerns and contribute to meaningful discussions. Staff's concerns about power dynamics in open communication reflected that certain perspectives may be overlooked, limiting the effectiveness of communication.

> "*We've had like round table type things, but they're not actually open or round table we, we hardly ever have like surveys… the thing is, the people closest to the problem are closest to the solution and so if you want to address the problem of turnover among the people on the ground, you should go to the people on the ground. And I think literally a handful of focus group, really open round table like here's the problem we're seeing and here's the solutions we're thinking and then actually implementing that would change a lot.*"

2e. Culture

Discussions among participating staff shed light on their perceptions of the organizational culture within the inner setting. In the context of program implementation, culture encompasses the norms, values, and underlying assumptions that shape staff behavior and an organization's operations and interactions among its members (Damschroder et al., 2019). The SWITCH Youth program targets youth who are at high risk of engaging in violent behavior and gun violence, often due to external factors such as family dysfunction, poverty, and exposure to violence. The significant trauma experienced by these youth can create complex emotional and behavioral challenges for staff. In addition, staff members in the program work in communities with elevated levels of violence, gang involvement, and drug-related crime. Given their work with youth in high-risk environments and the high-stress nature of their roles, there is a shared understanding of the importance of fostering a work environment that prioritizes staff well-being and safety. Staff's discussions further revealed barriers to fostering a positive and support organizational culture. Within this construct, one facilitator and two barriers were identified.

Facilitator

2e-F5. Mental wellness support for staff. Staff discussions on strategies for the successful implementation of the program highlighted the underlying assumptions about the high-stakes nature of their work, as well as the organization's culture of support and empathy. The staff appreciated the organization's awareness of the mental wellness for staff and accessibility of mental health services and self-care resources. They believed that psychological support for staff is critical for the sustainability of the program because the work often involves high levels of emotional engagement and can be emotionally draining.

> "*We have a team peer program, to work with, um, you know, we encourage wellness and then we also have a psychologist, if you have any issues, we provide free therapy sessions for the staff. So taking care of the staff and utilizing those services because we understand the stress of the work we do."*

Barriers

2e-B7. Staff safety concern. The staff shared concerns about both their emotional and physical safety. They spoke about the unpredictability and inherent risks they face when working in volatile communities, emphasizing their vulnerability. While there are safety protocols and communication channels in place, there was a clear need for more specialized training and real-time coordination, such as comprehensive safety planning and risk assessments, to strengthen safety precautions and support systems.

> "*The problem that you would have is if you're in an area of town where those types of things happen, I think we have more of an ability to become an innocent bystander, something that you can't prepare for."*

2e-B8. Staff burnout issues. The staff also discussed burnout issues as they experience prolonged exposure to the demanding and high-stress nature of their roles. Staff in the SWITCH Youth program engage with youth who have experienced trauma and involvement in violent activities. As staff members often feel deeply connected with the youth and their struggles, this

type of work can take a significant emotional toll. While necessary for providing effective support, such constant emotional investment can lead staff to feel emotionally drained and less able to engage effectively with the youth. Additionally, due to the need to address multiple urgent issues faced by youth, the SWITCH Youth program may require staff to work long hours, weekends, or during crisis situations. This can make it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance, as staff may feel unable to disconnect from the emotional weight of their responsibilities.

> "*People are struggling with work life balance. Some people are experiencing a lot of burnout. So let's go ahead and make more money, because it's not a 9 to 5, it's like a whenever I wake up to whenever I go to sleep. So people are struggling and I think more compensation would always be better.*"

3. Outer Setting

The outer setting refers to the external environment in which the SWITCH Youth program operates. In general, it includes the economic, political, and social contexts that can influence program implementation. Domschroder et al. (2019) identify key aspects of the outer setting, including stakeholder perceptions of how well client needs and preferences are understood and prioritized by the organization. Additionally, the outer setting includes stakeholder perceptions of the organization's level of collaboration with external partners and the influence of external policies, regulations, mandates, recommendations, and centralized decision-making (Domschroder et al., 2020). Staff discussions highlighted two key constructs of the outer setting relevant to the implementation of the SWITCH Youth program: 3a. Community resources and strategic partnerships and 3b. External policies and incentives. A total of one facilitator and seven barriers were identified within these constructs.

3a. Community resources and strategic partnerships

Participating staff recognized the importance of community resources in addressing the multiple needs of youth. Their discussions on facilitators and barriers to meeting those needs highlighted Memphis Allies' ongoing efforts to build and maintain collective networks that connect youth with community resources. Their discussions additionally identified limitations the organization faces in terms of staffing, funding, and service offerings, which impact its ability to better serve youth and enhance the program's effectiveness. Within this construct, one facilitator and two barriers were identified.

Facilitator

3a-F1. Deep connections to Memphis communities. The staff frequently mentioned Memphis Allies as a key network of community resources, highlighting its deep connections within Memphis communities. They noted that the SWITCH Youth program benefits from these strong ties, as Memphis Allies is already well-integrated into local community networks. The staff emphasized that the strategic partnerships established through these networks are crucial to the program's success.

> "*We've tried to expand our referral network. I've done a lot of school meetings, a lot of meetings with other nonprofits, like, for example, Memphis Inner City Rugby, Memphis Athletic Ministries. So we targeted nonprofits that we thought there may be some young people that meet criteria that you're touching too, and that you can refer. The thought process behind that is a school teacher, a basketball coach, someone in the community, a mentor; while it's still a referral, they likely have a better relationship with that young person than the court, and it's not a mandated service*."

Barriers

3a-B1. Need for early identification of high-risk youth. Staff's discussions highlighted the need for early identification of high-risk youth in the community. They observed that youth connected through outreach were more likely to feel engaged and motivated due to the

relationship-based nature of the outreach process compared to those referred by the court. Outreach workers can build relationships with these youth in a more organic way, helping them feel comfortable and empowered to join the program when they need. This early identification is crucial for addressing the specific needs of at risk youth before their issues escalate. Staff working with court-referred youth need additional time and effort to overcome resistance and build trust, due to the mandated nature of the referral. The staff believed that the outreach process could help prevent at risk youth from becoming involved in gun violence through early screening and identification.

> "*So when you're working with the highest risk youth, you wanna think about the areas or the kids who haven't been caught, the kids who have fought their charges but are still getting into trouble. And you also wanna think about the kids who are victims but haven't gotten in trouble. So we try to reach everybody in those areas.*"

3a-B2. Need for long-term follow up after the intervention. Staff emphasized the importance of broadening the program's goals to include long-term follow-up, encompassing both continued, lower-intensity support for youth and families after the formal intervention ends and ongoing data collection to assess long-term outcomes. Although youth achieved positive changes during the intervention, the environmental risk factors, such as lack of stable housing, community violence, and family dysfunction, might not disappear after the formal intervention ends, making long-term support critical in ensuring maintaining the positive changes. Some youth also experience multiple vulnerabilities, including emotional and behavioral issues, mental health struggles, and substance abuse. Any of these challenges can make it difficult for them to maintain progress. The staff believed that prolonged engagement with youth after the intervention could provide a bridge of support that continues as the youth navigate those challenges.

"*We're gonna start. We should have just started. I think it's 30-day, 90-day, six-month post discharge follow up so being able to see the sustainability of engagement and that positive pro-social is also going to be important."*

3b. External policies and incentives

Participating staff identified several external barriers affecting youth in the SWITCH Youth program. They emphasized that addressing these challenges requires a combination of supportive policies and targeted incentives to promote positive outcomes. The staff suggested the collective efforts required for the success of the program include youth stipends, increased spaces for youth, opportunities for youth employment, and housing stability. Their discussions about policies and incentives also touched on the need for comprehensive firearm education for youth and families, particularly in communities where access to firearms is more prevalent. The staff believed that these policies and incentives align better with the holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted needs of youth in the SWITCH Youth program. Five barriers were identified within this construct.

Barriers

3b-B3. Youth stipends. A key proposal was youth stipends as a form of reinforcement, which could motivate youth by celebrating success and promoting long-term behavioral change. While initially limited in scope, such incentives have the potential to promote intrinsic motivation and engagement.

"*We're also investigating and looking into some type of stipend or reinforcement program to celebrate success, to motivate [youth]. Maybe at first it might be superficial change, but if it jumpstarts it and then we work on that intrinsic change, that could be a helpful component.*"

3b-B4. More spaces for youth. The need for more spaces for youth, particularly for those not attending school, was also emphasized. Creating additional youth-friendly environments

could help keep them engaged in pro-social activities, reducing the likelihood of their involvement in violence or criminal behaviors.

> "*They don't have nothing to do with their time. It's a lot of places, uh, like prime example like Memphis Athletic ministries, they have programs for the kids, but they have to be in school. What about the kids that aren't in school? They can't get to school. Where can they go? They're still kids. They're under the age of 18. They can't go there because they're not in school? Then what they do? So I think that it should be more places that are, kid friendly. And, you know, try to take up some of their time because they just have too much time on their hands. Don't have nothing else to do. So they're going to find something to get into*."

3b-B5. Youth employment. To achieve long-term positive outcomes and reduce the risk of youth involvement in gun violence, the staff emphasized the importance of preparing youth for the workforce. They shared strategies for more focused employment readiness programs that teach both technical and emotional skills.

> *"I work on mock interviews, I work on employment skills even before you get a job you gotta know how to approach people first of all. You gotta know how to keep a job once you get it. You know what I'm saying? I don't want you just getting a job then get there and you don't have the skills to control your temper. Like let something get the best out of you and now you're doing something violent at work"*

***3b-B6. Housing issues*.** Issues surrounding housing instability among youth were frequently identified as significant challenges by the participating staff. They suggested that more comprehensive housing support could help prevent families from facing eviction, providing stability for youth participants.

> *"One of the only issues I have is housing, but that's not an overnight thing or something you can just fix. "Hey,* We don't have anywhere to go. Can we get there?" *I know it doesn't work like that, because once you get there, who's going to pay the bills? So I wouldn't say that we have a problem with resources. I think we could do more emergency shelters, like for these families that are evicted or something like that. They don't have the income and get in a situation where they do get evicted."*

3b-B7. Limited access to and more education about firearms. Policies aimed at limiting access to firearms were also discussed, with suggestions for increased regulations and more

comprehensive firearm education for families. They believed that such policies could reduce risks associated with firearm misuse, especially among youth in high-risk communities.

> "*Something that I think we should do that I truly believe would be beneficial is to have a more well-rounded gun safety program that we use to teach the families that we serve by teaching them how to store their weapon, how to carry their weapon, how to employ their weapon in self-defense, the risks and benefits to not properly handling that weapon, the risk and benefits to, I mean, the risk to of allowing their youth to get ahold of that weapon and what could happen in the community*."

4. Characteristics of Individuals

The CFIR defines characteristics of individuals as the traits, knowledge, beliefs, and personal attributes of those involved in program implementation (Damschroder et al., 2020). The Characteristics of Individuals domain expands the focus of implementation success beyond the organization and external environment to the individual level, emphasizing the role of staff attitudes, engagement, and capacity to drive change. While organizational structures, external environments, and implementation processes are essential, the knowledge, commitment to the intervention, strategies for overcoming barriers, and engagement of individual staff members determine how well a program is integrated into practice (Damschroder et al., 2020). In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, staff discussions highlighted key factors, such as their understanding of the intervention's value and necessity, their confidence in successfully implementing it, their personal process of adopting and integrating the intervention into their practice, and the strategies they use to ensure successful implementation. Staff discussions highlighted four key constructs of the characteristics of individuals that influence the effectiveness and sustainability of program implementation: 4a. Individual knowledge and beliefs about engagement with youth, families, and community, 4b. Personal strategies for engagement with youth and families, 4c. Personal resilience and coping, 4d. Reflection on rewarding experiences, identifying a total of twelve facilitator and three barriers.

4a. Individual knowledge and beliefs about engagement with youth, families, and community

Participating staff reflected on the importance of personal connections and their commitment to the community as key factors in the success of the SWITCH Youth program. The community-based approach is key to the program's success through engagement, as it positions staff members as relatable figures rather than outsiders, helping to bridge communication gaps and foster positive change. The staff have a strong identity as community members and believe their shared community experiences foster trust and relatability. Their discussions highlighted a comprehensive approach to engagement, focusing on building trust and connecting with youth and families. They employed various strategies to ensure effective engagement, such as being person-centered, coming in disarmed, and practicing non-judgmental listening. The staff also acknowledged challenges they face, including resistance and mistrust among caregivers and youth, as well as difficulties with boundary-setting that may hinder effective engagement. Despite these challenges, the staff find meaning in their work through small successes and their contributions to the changes and progress in youth and families. Their discussions further emphasized the importance of personal resilience and coping strategies, such as mental health resources and self-care practices, to maintain their well-being while working in challenging and high-stress conditions. This construct consists of three facilitators.

Facilitators

4a-F1. Identity as a community member. The staff demonstrated how they leverage their identity as community members to establish meaningful connections with the youth. Drawing from their own experiences within the community, they have developed a deep understanding of local organizations and community needs, enabling them to provide meaningful support not only to the youth they serve directly but also to the broader community. They believed that their deep

knowledge of the community, including its challenges and strengths, helps them build connections not only with the youth but also with other organizations and stakeholders, further enhancing their role as vital community members.

> *"Just waking up every day knowing that you make a difference in the city and then people lives. Being able to impact people in a positive way and feeling good relationships with people and so, um, this is, like amazed because I feel like, you know, we're doing God's work. So we we just over their purpose. And so this doesn't feel like a job to me. It just rewarded fulfillment. I'm doing something that's constructive and building community."*

4a-F2. Speak to youth from experience. The staff's discussions, especially among outreach and life coaches, reflected hardships they shared with youth, such as growing up in poverty and being exposed to violence. The staff's ability to relate to the youth's struggles creates a strong bond with the youth and their families. By sharing their own story, the staff member establishes themselves as a credible and trusted figure. The staff's discussions on their engagement strategies highlighted their ability to speak from personal experience by relating to the circumstances of youth and families.

> "*What I do is relate, because I'm a mother of five boys and have experienced my kids dealing with gun violence. I share some experience to let the parent know it's going to get overwhelming, but don't feel embarrassed about what your child has done to be in the program. We're here to help and work with you*."

4a-F3. Diverse lived experiences and expertise. The staff recognized diverse lived experiences and expertise as key strengths of the SWITCH Youth program. As a team, those with lived experience provide empathy and guidance that resonate deeply with youth facing similar struggles, while those with professional expertise bring evidence-based strategies for structured support. Although there may be challenges for staff in adjusting to clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the staff believed that their diverse experiences within the community and diverse expertise enhance the program's holistic approach to supporting youth through effective interdisciplinary collaboration.

"*We definitely need that two-part fold,, we definitely need it with the life coaches and outreach, them having their level of expertise and knowledge, a lot of clinicians without my team don't have that and maybe the other clinicians, they don't have that we... or Memphis Allies and SWITCH Youth, they look for individuals they have like lived experiences and certain knowledge and things like that*."

4b. Personal strategies for engagement with youth and families

In discussions about the engagement process with youth and families, the staff shared their personal strategies. They emphasized that their genuine interest in youths' well-being and persistent efforts to build meaningful, supportive relationships foster deeper connections and help establish trust. The staff have faced significant challenges in addressing resistance and mistrust among both youth and caregivers. They are very careful in setting professional boundaries with youth while simultaneously building consistent and trustworthy relationships. Despite these barriers, they endeavor to support youth and families without taking over, refrain from judgment, and seek to understand the underlying messages behind youths' behaviors and actions. Within this framework, five facilitators and three barriers were identified from the staff's discussions.

Facilitators

4c-F4. Being person centered. The staff's discussions exemplified a person-centered approach, characterized by treating individuals with respect, meeting them where they are, and building authentic relationships as their key strategies for engaging with youth and families. Rather than making assumptions based on written documents, they prioritize direct interaction to understand the current state, needs, and perspectives of youth and their caregivers. They believed that this approach fosters a supportive environment where youths' voices and choices are central, empowering them to take an active role in their decision-making processes.

"*Just meeting people where they are, and like allowing them to communicate to me what they see their issues are or what they are prioritizing. And then just me*

just kind of coming along and trying to work around that as best as I can. Or like, just encouraging them to move forward and supporting them in moving forward in a way that they're still in control of. So anyway, I'm just big on that. I don't ever want to come in and take over."

4c-F5. Coming in disarmed. The staff emphasized the importance of relating to the youth and families on a personal level with openness and genuine interests in their needs and situations. They strive to engage youth in a casual conversation without fear of judgement or authority. By coming in "disarmed," they can approach the youth not as a superior figure but as someone who understand their struggles, which encourages youth to open up and feel comfortable.

"*And then just continue to kind of get to know each other. So what do you like? You know what are your interests or your hobbies? Those kinds of things. And that second one, it's really just an opportunity to let the kids talk if they don't talk. Then I talk. But again, just being myself, being personable, you know, just being totally disarmed. I'm not walking in there, you know, suitcase and all that kind of stuff, I'm in my lounge clothes, you know*?"

4c-F6. Consistent and persistent engagement. The staff reflected on how they continue to reach out, even in the face of resistance and setbacks. Their efforts, including daily check-ins and casual conversations, are rooted in the idea of providing consistent, genuine support for youth and families. The staff's commitment to daily contact reinforces their role as constant, reliable figures, ultimately leading to a shift in youths' and families' attitudes toward the staff and services.

"*Challenges is really you have to be consistent. You have to be persistent. Like you have to engage even times they might blow you off. They might not pick up the phone, they might not respond to calls and messages. I mean, you just have to be consistent and persistent and you know what I mean? When they see that, when they see you as serious about the work that you're doing, when you're serious about them, you're serious about having plans for them, setting goals for them, reaching it. I mean, they come around most of the time.*"

4c-F7. Non-judgmental listening. The staff often discussed their basic skills of non-judgmental listening to facilitate engagement with youth and families. The staff believed non-

judgmental listening to be a tool to understand deeper, unspoken emotions and needs among youth and their caregivers. They try to allow the youth to lead the conversation, without pushing for immediate responses nor imposing solutions. They described that non-judgmental listening creates a space where youth feel heard and understood, even in situations where they may not fully express themselves.

> "*I always let them know that I'm a listening ear. I show empathy and sympathy, you know. And I let them tell me exactly what they want to tell me. I don't push.. You know, I let it flow because like I try to build on each session. I don't go in trying to get everything at once.*."

4c-F8. Focus on their "why." The staff's discussion further highlighted the importance of understanding the motivations behind youths' behaviors and actions. They demonstrated how they use the strategy of asking "why" to encourage youth to reflect on their behaviors. This approach not only empowers youth to understand their own actions but also helps staff cultivate empathy, provide tailored support, and work collaboratively with them.

> "*You know, a lot of kids they got different stories. Some of them do it because they don't have certain resources and some of them do it because they don't have certain, um, they feel something missing. It can be love. It can be attention. You know or sometimes it ends up being they don't have parents that don't provide for them that don't teach them right from wrong. Some kids do it for other reasons. You just gotta find that, like, my job is to figure out the why, pretty much to figure out the why*."

Barriers

4c-B1. Caregiver engagement challenges. The staff pointed out the lack of support from caregivers and families as a significant challenge. Caregivers often lack the resources or motivation to support their child's growth, or they may not prioritize the youth's needs because they have experienced similar challenges themselves. Some parents may not be fully engaged because the behavior of their children is financially supporting the household. The staff explained that those parents perceive the program as intrusive or fear of losing financial benefits

tied to their child's behavior. These challenges can create tension between the staff and caregivers, making it difficult to gain their full cooperation.

> "*Some of the main challenges is, I hate to say it, it's mom, parents sometimes. The caregivers sometimes feel like we're too in their business and some of them, like the behavior that their children is involved in because it helps bring extra money to them. So I have had several cases where parents just didn't want us involved. But yet we convinced the youth to stay involved*."

4c-B2. Mistrust and resistance. The staff illustrated the prevalent misunderstanding among youth and families that they are part of law enforcement, presenting it as a barrier to engagement. Youth may fear that staff members could report back to the courts and get them in trouble. This misconception can lead to disengagement or mistrust from both youth and caregivers. As a result, they may withhold important information, ultimately hindering effective support and intervention in the SWITCH Youth program.

> "*So we, the program a lot of times has to go into further explanation of what we are and what we do. I think a lot of times parents may mistake us as juvenile court or probation due to their kid being sent by juvenile court to do the program. So the biggest barrier is having to prepare like our staff and our people that we have, that we work with, and having to develop them to go out and say, look, these are important conversations we have to have because we're going into the home sometimes. We're taking their kid into the community with us. We have to open that line of trust to where they won't feel like their kid is gonna get detained with us*."

4c-B3. Boundary-setting difficulties. The staff further shared their struggles in setting boundaries with youth in the SWITCH Youth program. Despite building a strong rapport, similar to that of siblings or mother figures, staff members make it clear that they are not substitutes for family. Some staff, especially life coaches, faced specific challenges in setting financial boundaries with youth. While building rapport and trust with youth and families is essential, they recognized that maintaining clear and consistent boundaries is equally crucial to ensuring professional relationships are respected. Their discussions highlighted the complexity of

establishing boundaries that align with the program's goals and support the youth's long-term success.

> "*When they ask for some money on cash app and you say no, I've had a participant didn't answer for three days because I said no to the cash app, but it's like a fine line. You know, like if they're really asking for help or if they wanna buy some drugs? You not gonna cash app me at a 11-somthing at night and be like, "hey, I need $15, you know, to get something to eat or this and that, I'd be like, hey, where you at? I'm go ahead and bring you some.*"

4c. Personal resilience and coping

The participating staff's discussions highlighted their strong belief in their resilience and ability to employ effective coping strategies. Given their work with youth in high-risk environments and the high-stress nature of their roles, they recognized the critical importance of mental health care in maintaining their well-being and ensuring the sustainability of their work in challenging conditions. The staff shared various self-care practices, such as therapy sessions and peer support, to help them navigate these demands. Their collective understanding of personal resilience and coping underscored the need for staff to take care of themselves, enabling them to be fully present and supportive for the youth and families they serve in the SWITCH Youth program. Two facilitators were identified within this construct.

Facilitators

4c-F9. Mental health and self-care. The staff elaborated on the emotional and psychological demands of working with at risk youth, acknowledging that these challenges can be overwhelming. In response, Memphis Allies offers staff mental wellness by providing resources such as therapy sessions and self-care workshops. By prioritizing self-care and mental health, the program ensures that staff are better equipped to support youth and navigate challenges effectively. The staff believed that these efforts not only provide them with essential tools to manage stress but also contribute to the overall success of the program.

> "*I have seen the team sort of try to do better with the self-care. They actually provide free therapy sessions. So we have, like therapists in the community that they collaborated with, they pay for once a month. I personally take advantage of this."*

4c-F10. Personal well-being. Participating staff recognized the importance of self-care in the SWITCH Youth program, where they are supported by their teams through open communication to address challenges. This environment ensures that staff have the resources and support they need to stay resilient. By actively promoting self-care, the program helps staff maintain focus and energy in their work. The staff take advantages of regular check-ins on mental health and wellness within their teams. They discussed how they navigate self-care practices to maintain personal balance and resilience, even in the face of challenging work.

> "*One good thing about this is, um, that we have people surrounding us. So we got a good team and when I'm facing any barriers or things like that, I can communicate that with my team, um, my supervisor team, and then we work through those barriers and then we try to come up with a solution. Um, there's um, when you're working in your purpose, it doesn't feel like work. And then a lot of self-care is important to do a lot of self-care and we emphasize self-care. Because you have to take care of yourself. And then we do check ins, we health and mental health check ins.*"

4d. Reflection on rewarding experiences

The staff were asked what was rewarding about their role in the SWITCH Youth program. Staff shared that it was rewarding when they see youth make progress. Their discussions reflected that small achievements give staff a sense of pride and their work helps them grow professionally as they understand deeper reasons behind youth gun violence. These experiences not only motivate staff to keep supporting youth but also improve the overall impact of the program. Two facilitators were identified within this construct.

Facilitators

4d-F11. Observing youth progress. Participating staff shared that they feel fulfilled when they see real progress in youth, even if the changes happen slowly. The staff members take pride

in the youth's progress, and observing a turnaround in youth behavior is deeply rewarding to them. They described focusing on small but meaningful achievements that eventually lead to significant milestones, such as successful discharge and graduation. Seeing these successes reinforces staff members' dedication to their roles. Their reflections on these rewarding moments underscored their motivation to provide consistent, meaningful support, which benefits both the youth and the program.

> "*I had a kid who was shot 13 times. He got out, and the person who shot him stayed on the same street. When he got out we had to put him in a hotel for a couple of weeks. He hadn't been to school in over a year but loves school. We got him enrolled, and he was back walking before, because he wasn't walking at first. He's working now, doing construction, and still calling me to say how he's doing. He's on track to graduate. Just knowing that this kid, who has been through so much, is now doing this is rewarding*."

4d-F12. Professional growth and reflection. Through their work with youth, they gained a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes and circumstances contributing to the violence. Initially, some staff members blamed caregivers for a lack of motivation and engagement in addressing their child's issues. However, through direct engagement with youth and families, they gained valuable insight into the contextual and emotional drivers behind youth violence. This shift in thinking reflects the program's impact in transforming how staff members perceive and approach these issues, helping them recognize the complexity of the challenges youth face.

> "*Before my participation with this program, like, it really made no sense to me. Like it just from my perspective, it was just a lot of senseless gun violence and it hadn't changed much. But it definitely has given me an inside look as to why a lot of the gun violence happens and what's behind it and what's driving it. Whereas looking at it from the outside, you can't make sense of it, you know what I mean*?"

5. Process of Implementation

The Process of Implementation in the CFIR refers to implementation steps and activities such as the processes of planning, execution, evaluation, and sustainability (Domschroder et al.,

2019). The Process of Implementation domain focuses on the steps involved in bringing an intervention from planning to execution, ensuring that it is implemented effectively. It includes activities such as engaging stakeholders and delivering the intervention, while continuously gathering data and feedback to monitor progress (Domschroder et al., 2019). Feedback loops are critical for making real-time adjustments to the program. Concurrent evaluation of the program ensures that it is continuously adapted and improved based on evaluation results, ultimately supporting its long-term sustainability. In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, staff discussions focused on characteristics of the program at the early stage of implementation, logistical struggles, reflections on the program effectiveness, and outcome measures. These processes collectively ensure the program's success and ability to meet the needs of the youth served by the program. Staff discussions highlighted four key constructs of the processes of the SWITCH Youth program implementation: 5a. Rapid growth and expansion of the program, 5b. Referral system, 5c. On-going reflection on program effectiveness measures, 5d. Ethical concerns in youth work, with a total of three facilitator and seven barriers.

5a. Rapid growth and expansion of the program

Participating staff discussions revealed insights into the early-stage implementation of the SWITCH Youth program. They highlighted several challenges faced due the fast-paced nature of the program's growth and expansion. Although the program benefited from existing resources and program processes from the foundational model of the SWITCH program for adults, adjusting to the unique needs of youth requires constant adaptation. The program is still evolving, and much of the structure is being developed as it grows. Due to the evolving nature of the program, the program is shifting from rigid structures to a more autonomous approach. Staff discussions uncovered mixed feelings about the program's rapid expansion, recognizing the

importance of the work but also acknowledging the difficulty in keeping up with the pace. Overall, the staff's reflections on the program processes focused on how the SWTICH Youth program is grappling with the challenges of rapid growth. This construct consists of one facilitator and four barriers.

Facilitator

5a-F1. Foundational role of the SWITCH model. The staff discussed how the infrastructure and resources from the SWITCH model for adults were leveraged to develop the SWITCH Youth program. By building on the existing structures, methods, and community resources of the original SWITCH model, the program planning process became more straightforward and manageable. In the context of violence and community dynamics, the staff recognized that at risk youth are often connected to adults at risk for violence. Understanding the existing model and community context allows staff to focus on adapting and refining the SWITCH Youth program to better address the unique needs of the youth population.

> "*When we created Switch Youth, it was kind of like all brains on deck. What can we try to like, throw together and just, like, hobble along as we go? And what happened was we created something that mirrored more of a community-based program on steroids versus mirroring SWITCH.*"

Barriers

5a-B1. Adjusting to an evolving program. Staff discussions about the program process shed light on the challenges of working in a fast-growing program where things are constantly evolving. The staff members were required to adapt to an evolving system that offers more flexibility than what they might have been accustomed to. The fast-paced environment challenges staff to stay engaged and flexible while adjusting to new structures, roles, and strategies. At the same time, the staff discussed positive aspects of the developmental stage of the program. Embracing the flexibility and autonomy that come with a rapidly growing program

fosters both personal and professional development, as staff adapt to meet the evolving needs of the youth they serve.

> "So *with the program growing, people want to grow and develop, and they will grow and develop and they will leave and you will have to, you know, have newcomers come on board and start the constant cycle of like training and growth and development*."

5a-B2. Excessive amount of documentation requirements. The staff demonstrated excessive documentation, such as session notes, contact logs, and risk assessments, is a significant burden. In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, the detailed documentation is required based on regulatory requirements for tracking the progress of youth and any incidents that might arise. The extensive documentation requirements in the program include frequent updates on individual sessions, contact notes, treatment plans, and family session details. The staff expressed frustration over the time-consuming nature of the documentation involving repetitiveness. They discussed that frequent documentation does not significantly add value to their work but rather increases the risk of burnout among staff. The excessive amount of documentation could undermine program quality by distracting staff from direct engagement with youth. Their discussions on the documentation practices highlighted a need for more streamlined processes that allow staff to focus on their primary role of supporting youth.

> "*It's more so around documentation than anything... as far as the documentation and the prepping and those things, it definitely can be a little frustrating because change happens so frequently. But again, it's a new program, so you kind of have to expect that*."

5a-B3. Financial and logistical struggles for staff. The staff, especially life coaches, also shared the financial strain they face when the expenses, phone bills, food and activity costs for youth, are part of their job responsibilities but are not reimbursed in a timely manner. They discussed that the delayed reimbursements contribute to stress and burnout, especially when they have to pay out of pocket. Given the consistent relationships with the youth, personal

contributions to youth engagement, like buying food or assisting with small needs are common. Their discussions highlighted how financial burdens, and logistical challenges can affect staff morale, making it more difficult to sustain the same level of engagement with the youth. While they understand the regulations and procedures for reimbursement, the staff expressed frustration over the lack of recognition for their efforts and struggle to stay motivated in this situation.

> "*Yeah, instant approach. 'Cause it's like if I do take this child to Golf Pro or Putt Putt and I just spent60-70 dollars. You know, you put it in and then you don't get approved. That really would discourage the life coach from doing something else with the child. 'Cause. It's like, you know, I personally wouldn't 'cause that's something I wanted to do, but you got to think of it as a whole. Some people be like they'll do it, but then if they get turned down two, three times on expenses they just spent on the participant they might not spend more money on that participant*."

5a-B4. Disruptions in continuity of care. The staff were concerned that frequent changes in staffing and program processes could impact the continuity of relationships with youth in a program experiencing rapid growth and expansion. Staff discussions revealed that turnover and role changes sometimes result in frequent disruptions for youth in the program. Some youth have experienced multiple life coaches within a short period. Staff discussions highlighted that disruptions caused by the evolving nature of the program during its early stages of implementation can hinder the development of meaningful connections and continuity of care. These transitions may impact the overall quality and effectiveness of the program.

> "*So I've been in my role, like my kids have known me since the beginning. My life coach, he's been with me if it's been 12 months, he's been with me nine months. My other life coach, though, she's like a month in at this point, and the youth that I share with her, they have experienced three different life coaches since I've had them. And I'm grateful that I've been the constant like, "Hey, they're good, they got your back just like I do. You can trust them." But because their role looks different than mine and it's a constant change over here, that approach is different like every time I feel like. However, over here we kind of got our own groove. We know what to expect from each other because. we've been doing this together longer*."

5b. Referral system

The staff commented on the referral system, noting that most youth referred through the court system are initially difficult to reach or engage. They discussed how the court-mandated referral process serves as a significant barrier to engagement, as it forces youth into the program rather than allowing for voluntary participation. They elaborated that youth referred through the court system tend to be more guarded and resistant to engaging with the program. On the other hand, the staff observed that non-mandated referrals, such as those from outreach efforts, tend to be more motivated to engage. One barrier was identified within this construct.

Barrier

5b-B5. Balancing court mandates and youth engagement. The youth may view the program as another form of authority or law enforcement. Youth referred through the court system tend to be resistant to participating in the program because they feel coerced. The staff often struggle to make contact, and sometimes only find out the youth's status when they are confined. The staff discussed the challenges of navigating the tension between the obligatory nature of court referrals and the need for voluntary engagement to foster active participation.

> "*They're more reluctant to pull against the program. As in, they don't like to apply, they don't. I have the most issues with them, with communication, a little standoffish versus the ones who didn't come from the state, they're more engaged with the program, they call you, they're more forthcoming with information, things like that*."

5c. Ongoing reflection on program effectiveness measures

Staff discussions highlighted their experiences and perspectives on the progress and quality of the program implementation based on their involvement in the program implementation. Given multiprofessional involvement in the SWITCH Youth program, they acknowledged that frontline workers who work closely with the youth provide invaluable perspectives on the effectiveness of the program. They further emphasized the importance of

ongoing, open communication among staff and trust-building to create a collaborative environment where all team members, regardless of their role, contribute toward a shared goal. Staff discussions also highlighted a strong desire for continuous reflection and long-term evaluation. They acknowledged that the program is still in a phase of growth improvement, but the key to making necessary adjustments lies in looking at longitudinal data and tracking progress over time. They suggested several outcome measures and stressed that the long-term tracking is necessary for continuous improvement and program sustainability. This construct consists of two facilitators and one barrier.

Facilitators

5c-F2. Frontline workers' value. In their discussions, many of the staff noted the importance of frontline staff like, outreach workers, life coaches, and clinical specialists, in understanding and engaging with the youth. They believed that frontline staffs' direct involvement with the youth and families allows them to have a deeper insight into the challenges, needs, and progress of the youth. They valued the contributions of staff working directly with youth in shaping the program's approach and outcomes.

> "*The most important value to me is basically the frontline workers, because they're the ones who's out here engaged with the client. You know, they know their clients the best, you know, they can tell you the best what's going on..."*

5c-F3. Building trust and ongoing communication among staff. Staff recognized the collaborative nature of the program's success. They revealed that transparent communication and collaborative engagement among the staff members are crucial for ongoing reflection on program effectiveness. Effective communication, especially between leadership and frontline staff allows for real-time exchanges in outcome measures. Adjustments can be made based on continuous feedback. Ongoing, open communication in the decision-making process helps ensure that everyone involved in the program is on the same page and working toward common

goals. The staff stressed that the collective input and actions in outcome measures is essential for improving program effectiveness and ensuring consistency in service delivery.

> "*It's just being transparent. That's been my biggest strategy. I'm a very transparent person. I let them know that I'm here just to make sure that this program is going in the direction that the collective believes it should go. You know, I'm not here to push you to do anything. Like you signed up for, to do this work and this is what this work is. Now, if you have a better, if you have a solution to a problem, let's sit down and talk to talk about it. But if you're just having problems, you got to work through those problems and make sure that we're going in the right direction.*"

Barriers

5c-B6. Need for long-term tracking on outcome measures. The staff highlighted the need for long-term tracking of outcome measures even though the SWITCH Youth program is still in its early stages of implementation. They noted that youth engagement and program participation have been measured through their documentation practices. However, they expressed uncertainty about the program's effectiveness due to the lack of consistent evaluation of its impact on youths' long-term behavior and life outcomes. These discussions speak to a need for developing a robust evaluation system to assess program effectiveness over time. They suggested that the program should consistently reflect on what is working and what is not, including the data and feedback gathered from the youth, families, staff, and community partners. The staff valued and emphasized obtaining feedback from the youth and families for the program evaluation. The staff also expressed their interest in long-term tracking for youth. They believed that tracking youth progress after they leave the program would provide valuable insights into its sustainability. Their discussions on the program effectiveness highlighted several key indicators, such as youth engagement, behavioral changes, school enrollment, successful termination of the intervention, and recidivism/rearrest rates. Seven indicators commonly suggested by the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the SWITCH Youth program were as follows:

5c-B6-1. Input from youth participants and their families. The staff believed that the voices of youth and their caregivers can help identify the mechanisms that facilitate positive outcomes and determine whether the program is truly making a lasting impact. Their discussions highlighted that firsthand insights would provide valuable information on how well the program supports long-term success.

> "*So I would like to see like where those first youth are at, and how were they able to get help. Again there is no like evaluation that the youth can give to us like saying, "This is what helped me. This is what not helped me." This is, you know, like there's no form that they get to fill out, which I think personally I think there should be like an evaluation that the youth can do like every three months or every six months or something that says like, "My life coach is doing this and it's great and it's really helping me go to school or get a job or whatever or my life coach hasn't given me the resources."...They're the ones receiving the experience I think they're the ones that should be giving us their feedback and being like yeah, this would help me.*"

5c-B6-2. Level of engagement. The staff noted the importance of measuring youth engagement as a key indicator of the program's effectiveness. They pointed out that although the program might help prevent youth from engaging in gun violence in a short term, it is unclear whether these changes are lasting. Given this, they emphasized the need for a method to measure long-term, sustainable engagement as an indicator of the program's success.

> "*I think that's the biggest way that the outreach is being measured, the type of youth that we're bringing into the program, making sure that we have youth that are engaged, aligned, who have the history, and they fit the program model, but how it's being evaluated*."

5c-B6-3. Prosocial activities. The staff discussed the value of measuring whether youth are connected to positive opportunities as a key indicator of success. They believed that engagement in prosocial activities, such as sports, community service, or employment, is a critical outcome for evaluating whether the program is fostering positive behavioral change. They further discussed that tracking youth involvement in these activities provides insights into the program's impact on their social networks and overall development.

"*So those things I think those should be measured most definitely because that is happening. A lot of our kids have gotten jobs, a lot of our kids are engaged in prosocial activities. They're not going home and going into the streets. Like we have gotten a lot of our kids to go to school and after school you go to football.*"

5c-B6-4. School enrollment. The staff, particularly life coaches, emphasized their direct efforts to get youth back to or stay in school. They believed that tracking school enrollment is a key component of the program's approach to measuring progress and success. The staff viewed successful engagement in education as an essential part of holistic support for youth, contributing to their long-term success and stability.

"Once I ask those series of questions, then I know, like, are you in school? That's going to be the first thing. Are you in school? When's the last time you attended school? Because a lot of our kids are not in school. I don't think that if I, if a staff got six kids, maybe two is in school out of the six, because a life coach get six kids. Maybe two of the kids are in school. It's very rare that you find all six kids in school when you get them. But by the time the life coach get them, they'll be in school. Unless there's some reason they can't get in school or something like that. But we'll get them in school."

5c-B6-5. Successful program graduation. The staff highlighted successful program graduation as a vital component of program evaluation. In the SWITCH Youth program, successful discharges indicate that youth are staying out of trouble and maintaining relationships with staff. Given this, the staff believed that program graduation is not just about completion but about fostering sustainable change in the youth's mindset.

"*Seeing youth that had a huge chance of not graduating actually graduate and continue on, not ended up in prison. I saw a kid that looked like he was headed to prison for sure, and now he's graduated and he's in college. So, it's like you made a, you know, made a change."*

5c-B6-6. Recidivism rates. The staff were disappointed to know that there is currently no tracking system in place to monitor youth recidivism rates after the SWITCH Youth intervention as a long-term outcome measure. They emphasized that rearrest or re-

confinement is an essential and measurable outcome in the program, given that most participants are court mandated.

> "*We've had a few kids that have graduated or discharged from our program that haven't been rearrested, that are actually doing well, that actually still keep in contact with their life coaches, and they've been discharged for almost a year."*

5c-B6-7. Safe, alive, and out of jail. The staff shared the fundamental goal of the program, including safe, alive, and out of jail, in their reflections on the program evaluation. Ensuring the safety and well-being of youth, particularly by keeping them alive and out of jail reflects the importance of recidivism reduction as a key measure of the program success. They agreed that the program evaluation needs to track how effectively it achieves these outcomes.

> *"A huge thing that I have heard within the program is, safe, alive, and out of jail and I think those are three big things when you're working with the highest risk to remember. So if you have a discharge, you know you can check in with them, maybe put things in place that I do a three month check in and then a six month check in, you know. Also, like we do weekly, you know, are they safe? Are they alive? Are they detained?"*

5d. **Ethical concerns in youth work**

The staff highlighted ethical concerns in the SWITCH Youth program implementation, such as a lack of choice for youth due to the coercive nature of court mandates and the close relationship between the program and law enforcement. While they understand that youth are court-mandated to participate, the staff members felt that this close connection could undermine the program's ability to build trust, especially if youth perceive it as part of the justice system. One barrier was identified within this construct.

Barrier

5d-B7. Lack of awareness on ethical issues and ethical training. Their concerns about the ethical issues in the program implementation also highlighted over-documenting sensitive

information. They thought that it may later be used against the youth and could lead to ethical violations such as breaches of confidentiality. The close relationship with law enforcement further complicates ethical boundaries. Staff discussions highlighted a lack of training on the ethical considerations of documentation, particularly in situations where staff are unsure whether to document sensitive information. The lack of ethical training could lead to staff uncertainty when confronted with complex situations, such as privacy concerns or navigating the boundaries of their roles.

> "*But there's like nuance there and we're not trained around the ethics of documentation in that way. Also, one of our funders is MPD like, if someone is employed by Memphis Police Department, who can pull at random 5 young people's records, right? And that's something I know now, but that's not something that is like public information or that like everybody knows. Me personally, I'm not gonna document that in my session note right, because I'm going to assume what if I ever get subpoenaed? And I don't want my note to be the reason why a young person carries another. I'm not doing the police's job for them. I'm not doing the court's job for them, so if it's not relevant to treatment, I'm not going to document it. That is the way I was trained as a social worker. And I do worry that people are documenting incriminating information and maybe over-documenting because there's such an emphasis on safety*."

Results from Quantitative Component

Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration in the SWITCH Youth program

The effectiveness of the SWITCH Youth program is rooted in strong interprofessional team collaboration, involving outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, case managers, and leadership to ensure a holistic approach to supporting youth at risk of gun violence. Collaboration across professional roles enables a more comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of youth. Given the program's structure, evaluating the extent to which multidisciplinary collaboration facilitates problem-solving, coordinated service delivery, and seamless communication is essential for understanding its impact on youth outcomes. A well-functioning interprofessional team enhances service delivery by fostering shared decision-making, streamlining communication, and leveraging diverse expertise to address the multifaceted challenges youth face. Evaluating team collaboration can help identify strengths in coordination as well as areas for improvement, such as potential communication gaps, role ambiguity, or variations in understanding program models. As the program evolves, ongoing evaluation of team collaboration will be key to refining strategies, optimizing resource use, and enhancing the program's impact on youth safety and well-being.

Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II). The Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) was used to evaluate the extent to which professionals in the SWITCH Youth program collaborate effectively in three key constructs: Partnership, Cooperation, and Coordination (Orchard, 2015). Partnership emphasizes the extent to which team members value each other's expertise and actively contribute to shared decision-making. It ensures mutual respect, shared leadership, and joint responsibility among staff across different roles in implementing the SWITCH Youth program.

An interprofessional team with strong partnerships promotes an environment where all voices are heard, fostering a sense of collective ownership over program goals. It also strengthens trust and open communication among staff members and enhances their ability to support youth and families effectively.

Cooperation refers to the level of teamwork and collaborative effort among professionals to achieve shared program goals. It measures how well team members work together, resolve conflicts, and adapt to challenges (Orchard, 2018). In the context of the SWITCH Youth program, a team with strong cooperation fosters problem-solving through collective input, ensuring that youth receive holistic, coordinated support. Well-established cooperation within the team also reduces service fragmentation through consistent communication and collaboration across different roles and enhances adaptability in addressing unexpected challenges together.

Coordination emphasizes the structured processes and strategies that facilitate smooth teamwork and service delivery. It measures the extent to which roles, responsibilities, and workflows are clearly defined and effectively integrated (Orchard, 2018). Coordination among professionals in the SWITCH Youth program can ensure that each team member understands their role and how it fits within the broader team effort. A well-coordinated team can reduce duplication of efforts and gaps in service provision, thereby promoting consistency in care planning and intervention delivery, leading to more efficient case management.

Assessment Results: Interprofessional Team Collaboration in the SWITCH Youth program

The Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) was administered to twenty-one staff members who participated in the qualitative interviews. Table 3 presents descriptives statistics, including the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and range for each construct and its associated survey item.

Partnership. An overall mean score in the partnership construct was 4.29 (SD = 0.53, Range = 3.38 – 5), indicating a strong perception of partnership among staff members. The overall positive rating suggests that the SWITCH Youth program has a solid foundation of partnership, where the staff members generally value teamwork and shared leadership. They likely feel respected, valued, and engaged in collaborative decision-making.

Among individual items, the highest-rated statement was “Encourage each other and participants and their families to use the knowledge and skills that each of us can bring in developing plans of care” (M = 4.45, SD = 0.50). A high mean score in this item reflects a strong consensus among the staff members that they actively encourage each other, as well as youth participants and their families, to leverage their knowledge and skills when they develop plans for services and care. It also suggests that professionals in the SWTICH Youth program feel confident in fostering collaborative decision-making and valuing the contributions of all involved. Conversely, the lowest-rated statement was "Team members coordinate health and social services based on participant needs" (M = 3.95, SD = 0.92), indicating relatively lower agreement among respondents. This suggests that the staff members perceive more challenges in effectively coordinating health and social services based on the needs of youth participants. It is also room for improvement in ensuring seamless coordination between the professionals, such as improving communication channels, clarifying roles, or implementing standardized procedures for service integration.

Cooperation. An overall mean score of cooperation was 4.30 (SD = 0.56, Range = 3.31 - 5.00), reflecting a strong cooperative environment among multidisciplinary staff members in the SWITCH Youth program, where staff members actively cooperate to support youth at risk of

gun violence. This implies that staff largely agree that they work well together, communicate effectively, and collaborate to achieve shared goals.

Among individual items, the highest agreement was observed for "Help and support each other" (M = 4.35, SD = 0.73) and "Are open and honest with each other" (M = 4.35, SD = 0.65), indicating strong team cohesion and open communication among the staff members within the SWITCH Youth program. This suggests that staff feel a strong sense of teamwork and mutual support, where they can rely on each other for help in a positive team culture. This also suggest that staff perceive a high level of transparency and trust in their communication. They feel comfortable sharing thoughts, concerns, and feedback with one another. However, the lowest-rated item was "Are flexible in their roles based on each other's feedback" (M = 4.15, SD = 0.85). A mean score of 4.15 still indicates generally positive perceptions of adaptability among the staff members, but it is lower relative to other aspect of cooperation. While overall cooperation among staff is strong, role adaptability and responsiveness to peer feedback may require further attention. They may experience some challenges in adjusting their roles or responsibilities in response to team feedback and they need greater clarity or support in adjusting their roles based on collective team input.

Coordination. The participating staff reported the highest overall mean score (M = 4.39, SD = 0.60, Range = 3.00–5.00) in this coordination construct. This indicates that overall, the staff members perceive the program as well structured in terms of role clarity, task alignment, and service integration. The staff members tend to believe the SWITCH Youth program effectively coordinates responsibilities across different roles, including outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, case managers, and leadership, minimizing role confusion and ensuring an efficient services delivery system.

The highest-rated item in the coordination construct was “Recognize the lead of the designated supervisor and LPE to ensure coordinated efforts" (M = 4.58, SD = 0.67). This suggests that staff members clearly recognize and respect the leadership roles of the designated supervisor and follow their guidance, contributing to effective coordination within the program. To be specific, a high mean score in the item indicates that the presence of strong leadership contributes to effective oversight and direction, helping ensure that team efforts remain well-organized and aligned. Conversely, the item, "Are encouraged to actively engage in coordinated efforts for plans of care guided by the leaders" showed a slightly lower score (M = 4.47, SD = 0.88). This suggests that most staff agree that they are encouraged to actively contribute to care planning under leadership guidance. While the staff’s shared perception on the leadership in the SWITCH Youth program fosters an environment where team members are invited to collaborate, some staff may feel less engaged or less involved in decision-making processes. Differences in role expectations, workload, or communication pathways could contribute to inconsistent experiences of engagement across staff members.

The results from the Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) indicate that interprofessional collaboration among team members in the SWITCH Youth program is generally strong across the three key constructs: Partnership, Cooperation, and Coordination. This suggest that staff members effectively work together, communicate, and align their efforts to support youth at risk of gun violence. Staff acknowledge and respect each other’s roles and expertise, fostering a culture of mutual support and shared decision-making. They demonstrate strong teamwork and problem-solving abilities to address challenges and positive holistic support. Overall, roles, workflows, and leadership structure in the SWITCH Youth program are well-defined to ensure well-coordinated collaboration and efficient case

management. However, while the overall collaboration is positive, certain areas require attention to enhance team effectiveness and service delivery, particularly in aspects with relatively lower scores. Staff reported lower scores that reflects their challenges in adjusting their roles based on team feedback, possibly due to rigid role definitions, workload constraints, or differences in training. Variability in responses suggests inconsistencies in how health and social services are coordinated to meet youth needs, highlighting potential communication gaps between service providers. Improving teamwork flexibility can be achieved by offering cross-training, understanding shared roles when needed, and having open discussions about team expectations. Future efforts should focus on structured coordination protocols, enhanced communication channels, and a centralized information-sharing system to support cohesive collaboration and service delivery.

Table 3

Assessment of Interprofessional Team Collaboration Scale II (AITCS-II) (N = 21)

Construct		Question	M	SD	Range
Partnership	**M: 4.29 Sd: 0.53 Range: 3.38 - 5**	When we are working as a team, all of my team members:			
		Establish agreements on goals for each participant	4.37	0.58	3-5
		Commit to the goals set out by the team	4.20	0.60	3-5
		Consider alternative approaches to achieve shared goals	4.40	0.58	3-5
		Include participants in setting goals for their care	4.40	0.62	3-5
		Listen to the wishes of their participants when determining the process of care chosen by the team	4.25	0.50	3-5
		Encourage each other and participants and their families to use the knowledge and skills that each of us can bring in developing plans of care	4.45	0.50	4-5
		Listen to and consider other members' voice and opinions/views in regards to individual service/life plan processes	4.35	0.65	3-5
		Cooperate to reach consensus on service treatment/decisions	4.20	0.68	3-5
		Feel a sense of belonging to the group	4.15	0.73	3-5
		Establish deadlines for steps and outcome markers related to providing services to participants	4.10	0.77	2-5
		Communicate plans for participant services	4.30	0.64	3-5
		When we are working as a team:			
		There is support from the organization for teamwork	4.20	0.93	2-5
		Team members coordinate health and social services (e.g., financial, occupation, housing, connection with community, spiritual) based upon participant needs	3.95	0.92	2-5
		Team members use a variety of communication means (e.g., written messages, e-mail, electronic participant records	4.65	0.47	3-5
		There is consistent communication with team members to discuss participant contact and services	4.30	0.71	3-5
		All members of our team are involved in goal setting for each participant	4.35	0.65	3-5
Cooperation	**M: 4.30 Sd: 0.56 Range: 3.31 - 5**	When we are working as a team, all of my team members:			
		Understand that there are shared knowledge and skills between team members	4.35	0.65	3-5
		Create a cooperative atmosphere among the members when addressing participant situations	4.20	0.68	3-5
		Establish a sense of trust among the team members	4.15	0.73	3-5
		Understand the boundaries of what each other can do	4.10	0.77	2-5
		Maintain a consistent focus on the participant	4.30	0.64	3-5
		Work with the participant and his/her/their relatives in adjusting service/life plans	4.20	0.75	3-5

		Exhibit a high priority for gaining insight from participants about their wishes/desires	4.30	0.64	3-5
		Share the power with each other	4.20	0.75	3-5
		Help and support each other	4.35	0.73	3-5
		Respect and trust each other	4.30	0.64	3-5
		Are open and honest with each other	4.35	0.65	3-5
		Are flexible in their roles based on each other's feedback	4.15	0.85	2-5
		Strive to achieve mutually satisfying resolutions for differences of opinions	4.15	0.73	3-5
Coordination	**M: 4.39 Sd: 0.60 Range: 3 - 5**	When we are working as a team, all of my team members:			
		Recognize a unique definition of collaboration among professionals with different roles in the SWITCH Youth team	4.35	0.65	3-5
		Agree that all team members are equally contributing to the shared goals for plans of care	4.25	0.70	3-5
		Encourage and support open communication, including with the participants during team meetings	4.30	0.64	3-5
		Use and agree upon processes to resolve conflicts	4.30	0.56	3-5
		Recognize the lead of the designated supervisor and LPE to ensure coordinated efforts	4.58	0.67	3-5
		Are aware of the coordinated efforts for tasks and responsibilities managed by the supervisor and LPE	4.53	0.68	3-5
		Are encouraged to actively engage in coordinated efforts for plans of care guided by the leaders	4.47	0.88	2-5

Youth Participants in the SWITCH Youth Program

For the evaluation of the SWITCH Youth program, monthly youth data were collected over a one-year period, from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. During this observation period, a total of 268 youth were enrolled in the program. Specifically, 186 youth received or were receiving services from the "SWITCH Youth" program (hereafter referred to as SWITCH Youth), while 124 youth participated in the "SWITCH Youth - Active Outreach" program (hereafter referred to as Active Outreach). Additionally, 37 youth were enrolled in both programs. Over the course of the one-year observation period, 44 youth were transitioning out of full programming. As of the observation end date (December 31, 2024), 142 youth remained enrolled and were receiving services through either program. Due to inconsistencies in the collected data, this report focuses on 186 youth in the SWITCH Youth program to examine their characteristics and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

New Admissions per Month in the SWITCH Youth Program

Over the observed period, the number of new enrollments varied each month. Table 4 presents the number of youth newly admitted to the SWITCH Youth program on a monthly basis. On average, the program admitted 15 youth per month across the observed period. The highest number of admissions was recorded in November 2024 (N = 24, 12.9%), while the lowest occurred in September 2024 (N = 10, 5.4%).

Table 4

New Admission per Month (N = 186)

Start Date	New Admissions	Descriptive Statistics
January	21	
February	17	
March	14	
April	15	
May	16	
June	14	M = 15.08 SD = 4.46 Range: 10 - 24
July	21	
August	13	
September	10	
October	11	
November	24	
December	11	

Demographics of Youth admitted to the SWITCH Youth Program

The vast majority of youth participants identified as male (97.85%, N = 182), while a small proportion identified as female (2.15%, N = 4). The program predominantly serves male youth (see Table 5). The vast majority of youth identified as Black (94.62%, N = 176), followed by Hispanic (4.30%, N = 8), and White (2.15%, N = 4). Two youth (1.07%) were identified as biracial, as they selected more than one racial category. The average age at first enrollment was 15.95 years (SD = 1.30), ranging from 12 years to 18 years. This suggests that the majority of youth enrolled in the program are in mid-adolescence.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics on Youth admitted to the SWITCH Youth program (N = 186)

	N (%) or M (SD)
Race	
Black	176 (94.62%)
White	4 (2.15%)
Hispanic	8 (4.30%)
Biracial	2 (1.07%)
Gender	
Male	183 (97.85%)
Female	4 (2.15%)
Age at first enrollment	15.95 (1.30)

Referral Sources

Table 6 presents referral sources. A significant majority of youth were referred by juvenile court including the Shelby County Juvenile Court (45.16%, N = 84), followed by referrals from the Public Defender's Office (33.33%, N = 62) and the District Attorney's Office (0.54%, N = 1). A smaller proportion of youth were referred through the outreach specialist (N = 16, 8.60%), Youth Villages employees (4.84%, N = 9), and Self/Family referral (2.69%, N = 5). Additional referrals came from the Department of Children's Services (2.15%, N = 4) and other unspecified sources (2.69%, N = 5).

Table 6

Referral Source (N = 186)

	N (%)
Referral source	
Shelby County Juvenile Court	84 (45.16%)
Public defender (Juvenile Court)	62 (33.33%)
District Attorney (Juvenile Court)	1 (0.54%)
Outreach specialist	16 (8.60%)
Youth Villages employee	9 (4.84%)
Self/Family referral	5 (2.69%)
Dept. of Children's Services	4 (2.15%)
Other	5 (2.69%)

Youth Risks and Needs Identified during the SWITCH Youth Program

During the SWITCH Youth program, youth risks and needs were assessed (see Table 7). The most frequently identified needs were legal issues (94.62%, N = 176), substance abuse (72.58%, N = 135), and behavioral issues (68.82%, N = 128). Abuse or neglect was identified in 66.13% (N = 123) of cases. Other commonly identified needs included educational issues (44.62%, N = 83), physical health issues (30.65%, N = 57), and emotional issues (29.03%, N = 54). Less frequently identified were suicide or self-harm concerns (19.35%, N = 36), violent behavior (17.74%, N = 33), and basic needs (16.67%, N = 31). Employment (2.15%, N = 4) and financial needs (2.15%, N = 4) were also identified among the youth participants.

Table 7

Youth Risks and Needs Identified during the SWITCH Youth Program (N = 186)

	Number of Identified Youth
Abuse or neglect	123 (66.13%)
Behavioral issues	128 (68.82%)
Physical health issues	57 (30.65%)
Educational issues	83 (22.62%)
Emotional issues	54 (29.03%)
Legal issues	176 (94.62%)
Violent Behavior	33 (17.74%)
Substance abuse	135 (72.58%)
Suicide or self-harm	36 (19.35%)
Employment needs	4 (2.15%)
Financial needs	4 (2.15%)
Basic needs	31 (16.67%)

Engagement Contacts and Services Received during the SWITCH Youth Program

Table 8 presents descriptive statistics on engagement contacts by the staff in various roles, services received, and program discharge status for youth participating in the SWITCH Youth program. The SWITCH Youth program is designed to provide intensive, individualized support through consistent engagement across several service domains. Life Coaches are expected to contact participants multiple times per week, offering ongoing mentorship, life planning, and crisis support. Clinical Specialists are expected to provide weekly therapy or counseling sessions, while family sessions are encouraged at least monthly to promote family/caregiver engagement and stability. Case Managers support participants as needed, focusing on service coordination and resource linkage. These expectations guide the implementation of services and help establish benchmarks for evaluating engagement levels.

Overall, the staff frequently reached out to youth to offer services and engagement opportunities. The majority of youth (76.34%, N = 142) remained active in the program at the

time of data analysis (December 31, 2024), while 44 participants (23.66%) had officially been discharged. Admission notes were available for 60.75% of youth (N = 113, M = 0.61, SD = 0.50). The average length of program participation was 166.6 days (SD = 101.22), with durations ranging from 1 to 374 days. The large standard deviation suggests substantial variability in how long youth remained engaged in the program. Some participants had brief engagements, exiting shortly after entry, while others participated for nearly a full year.

Life coach contacts (98.39%, N = 183, M = 91.06, SD = 62.93) and life coach sessions (N = 184, 98.92%, M = 32.06, SD = 23.17) were the most used strategies for engaging with youth, indicating high levels of engagement with life coaching. Individual sessions, counseling, or therapy were received by 98.38% of youth (N = 183, M = 17.75, SD = 12.76), while clinical contacts were recorded for 86.39% of youth (N = 160, M = 12.02, SD = 13.27). Family sessions, counseling, or therapy were provided to 83.33% of youth (N = 155, M = 5.64, SD = 5.50), highlighting the program's integration of family engagement. Contact/case management engagement was recorded for thirty-two youth (17.20%, M = 0.59, SD = 2.08), suggesting that a relatively small proportion of participants received this type of service.

Table 8

Engagement Contacts and Services Received during the SWITCH Youth Program (N = 186)

	Number of Identified Youth	M (SD)	Range
Program discharge status			
Transitioning out of full programming	44 (23.66%)		
On-going participation	142 (76.34%)		
Length of program participation (day)		166. 60 (101.22)	1- 374
Admission note[1]	113 (60.75%)	0.61 (0.50)	0 - 2
Life coach contact note	183 (98.39%)	91.06 (62.93)	0 - 272
Life coach session note	184 (98.92%)	32.06 (23.17)	0 - 93
Clinical contact note	160 (98.395)	12.02 (13.27)	0 - 83
Contact/Case management note	32 (17.20%)	0.59 (2.08)	0 - 17
Individual session/Counseling/Therapy	183 (98.38%)	17.75 (12.76)	0 - 51
Family session/Counseling/Therapy	155 (83.33%)	5.64 (5.50)	0 - 25

[1] Individual counseling intake session

Pre- and During-Program Charges

The number of charges before program enrollment (pre-charges) and during the program (during-charges) were compared to assess the program's effectiveness (see Table 9). Of the 186 youth who participated in the SWITCH Youth program, 165 youth (88.71%) had at least one charge prior to the intervention, with an average of 3.20 charges (SD = 0.47). Following the intervention, the number of youth with charges decreased to 35 (18.82%), with a mean charge count of 2.88 (SD = 1.13) during the program.

Prior to the intervention, the most common charges were related to weapons, reported in 56.99% of youth (n = 106), and thefts, recorded in 52.15% of youth (n = 97), with corresponding means of 0.70 (SD = 0.72) and 0.82 (SD = 1.03), respectively. Violent charges were also prevalent, with 38.17% of youth (N = 71) charged, and an average charge rate of 0.54 (SD = 0.88). Other notable pre-program charges included possession (12.37%, N = 23), violation of probation or court orders (7.53%, N = 14), and other charges (43.55%, N = 81). Following the

intervention, there was a noticeable reduction in the number of identified youth across most charge categories. Violent charges decreased to 18 youth (9.68%), with a mean charge rate of 0.15 (SD = 0.54). Weapons-related charges dropped to 14 youth (7.53%), with a mean of 0.08 (SD = 0.29). Violations of probation or court orders also decreased (2.15%, N = 4, M = 0.03, SD = 0.19). Thefts and possession charges declined substantially, with only 14 youth (7.53%) charged with theft (M = 0.09, SD = 0.32) and 2 youth (1.08%) charged with possession (M = 0.02, SD = 0.16). Other charges were reported in 15 youth (8.06%), with a mean charge rate of 0.12 (SD = 0.44).

Table 9

Comparison of the Number of Charges Pre- and During-Program (N = 186)

Charge Category	Number of Identified Youth	M (SD)
Total Charges Pre-Program	165 (88.71%)	2.90 (0.47)
Total Charges During the Program	35 (18.82%)	0.17 (1.13)
Pre-Violent charges	71 (38.17%)	0.54 (0.88)
During-Violent charges	18 (9.68%)	0.15 (0.54)
Pre-Weapons	106 (56.99%)	0.7 (0.72)
During-Weapons	14 (7.53%)	0.08 (0.29)
Pre-Violation probations/court orders	14 (7.53%)	0.09 (0.34)
During-Violation probations/court orders	4 (2.15%)	0.03 (0.19)
Pre-Thefts	97 (52.15%)	0.82 (1.03)
During-Thefts	14 (7.53%)	0.09 (0.32)
Pre-Possession	23 (12.37%)	0.18 (0.58)
During-Possession	2 (1.08%)	0.02 (0.16)
Pre-Other	81 (43.55%)	0.86 (1.24)
During-Other	15 (8.06%)	0.12 (0.44)

Program Effectiveness in Reducing Charges

A series of fixed-effects regression were conducted to examine the change in pre- and during the program charge counts for the total number of charges and six charge categories including violent charges, weapons charges, probation/court violations, theft, possession, and other charges.

Total Number of Charges

Table 10 presents the results from fixed-effects regression model to examine whether the total number of charges changed pre- to during the program. The results indicated that there was a significant decrease in the total number of charges from pre- to during program participation (B = 2.90, SE = 0.25, $p < .001$, 95% CI **[**2.414, 3.381**]).** The length of program participation was not a significant predictor for charges (B = 0.002, SE = 0.001, $p = 0.107$, 95% CI [-0.000, 0.004])**.** The findings indicate that participation in the SWITCH Youth program was associated with a substantial decrease in the total number of charges, independent of the duration of a youth's participation.

Figure 2 displays the mean differences for the total number of charges pre- and during the program by length of program participation. The mean total number of charges significantly decreased from 2.90 pre-program to 0.17 during the program. This substantial reduction suggests that program participation may be associated with decreased youth involvement in chargeable offenses. Figure 3 presents the mean differences in total charges from pre- to during the program across three categories of program participation length: Short (1–122 days), Medium (123–203 days), and Long (204–374 days) stay groups. Youth in all three categories exhibited notable reductions in mean charge counts from pre- to during-program periods. Specifically, those in the Short stay group experienced a decline from 2.82 to 0.42 charges, the Medium stay group from

3.05 to 0.45 charges, and the Long stay group from 3.73 to 0.56 charges. These findings suggest that longer program engagement may be associated with greater reductions in charge involvement, although meaningful declines were observed across all groups.

Table 10

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for the Total Number of Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Total Charges	Intercept	2.90	0.246	11.781	0.000	2.414, 3.381
	Time	-2.726	0.226	-12.045	0.000	-3.171, -2.281
	Length of stay	0.002	0.001	1.614	0.107	-0.000, 0.004
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.286$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.282$					
	Log-Likelihood = -816.668					
	AIC = 1639.336, BIC = 1651.093					

Figure 2

Mean Total Number of Charges Pre- and During the Program

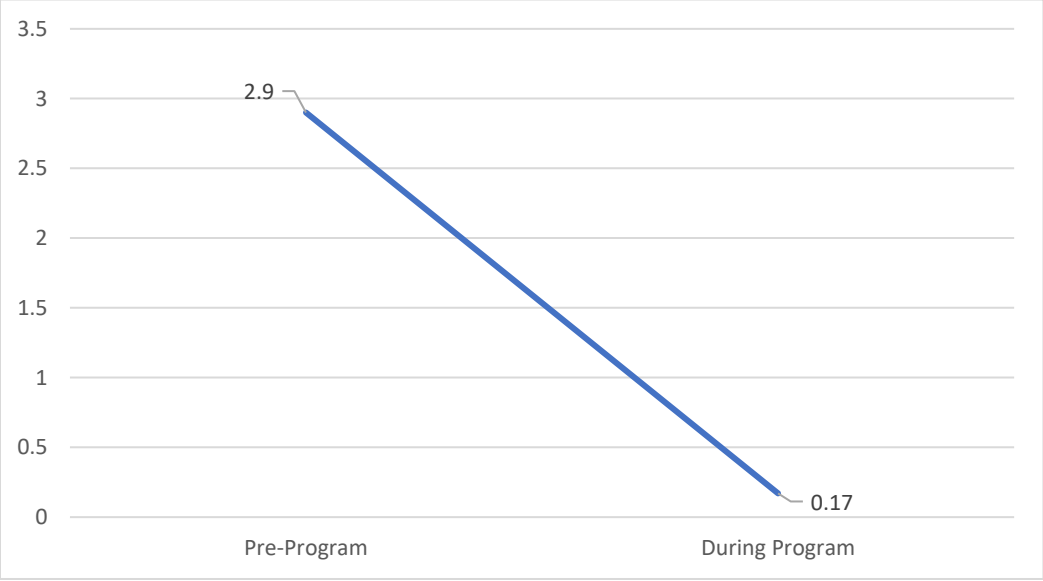
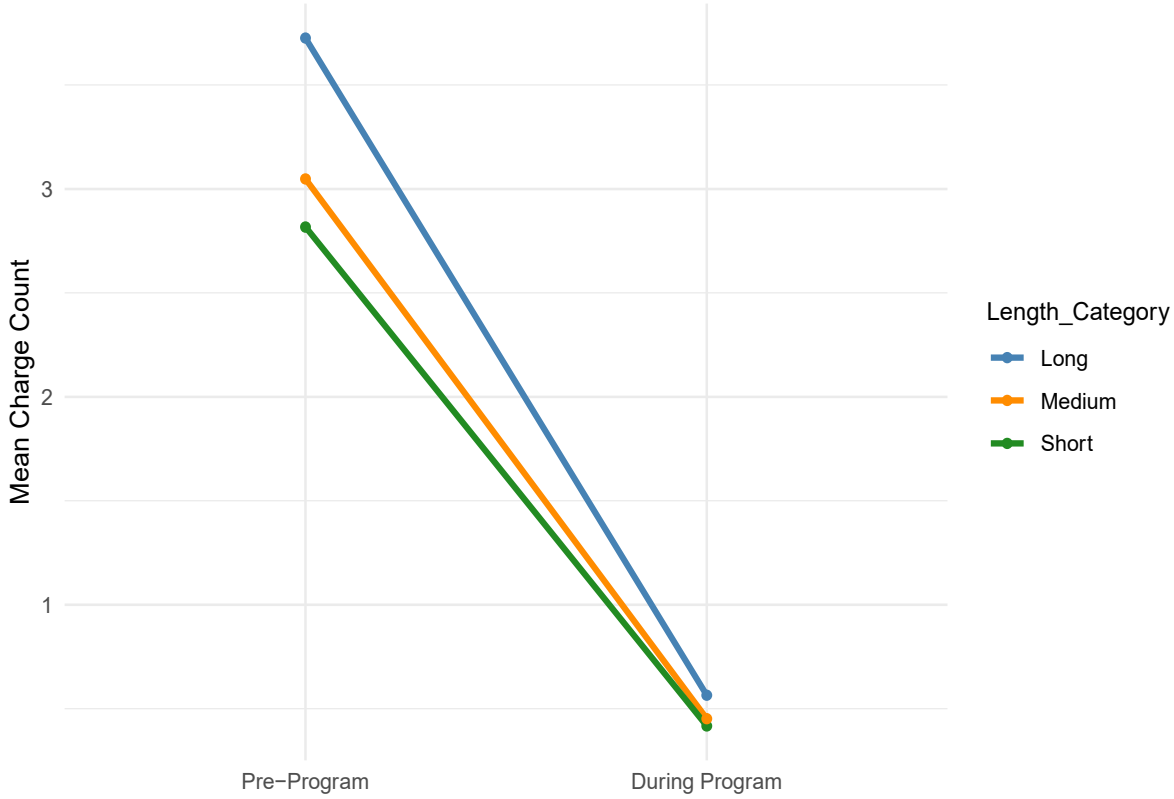


Figure 3

Mean Total Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Violent Offense Charges

Next, differences in the number of charges from the pre-program to the during-program period were examined by type of charge. First, Table 11 presents the results from the fixed-effects regression model for violent offense charges, including first- or second-degree murder, aggravated assault, aggravated robbery, assault, carjacking, attempted first- or second-degree murder, domestic violence, rape, aggravated trespass, and related offenses. The number of violent charges significantly decreased from the pre-program to the during-program period (B = -0.40, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.546, -0.249]). The length of program was not a significant predictor of post-intervention violent charges (B = 0.00, SE=0.00, p =0.979, 95% CI [-0.001, 0.001]).

Figure 4 displays the mean differences for violent offense charges the pre-program and during-program periods. The mean number of charges for violent offenses significantly decreased from 0.54 in the pre-program period to 0.15 during the program. This substantial reduction suggests that participation in the program was associated with a notable decline in youth involvement in violent offending behavior. Figure 5 displays the mean differences for violent offense charges pre- and during-program by length of program participation. Youth in the Short stay (1–122 days) and Long stay (204–374 days) groups exhibited substantial reductions, while the Medium stay group (123–203 days) showed a more modest decline.

Table 11

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for Violent Offense Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Violent	Intercept	0.541	0.812	6.605	0.000	0.380, 0.703
	Time	-0.398	0.075	-5.275	0.000	-0.546, -0.249
	Length of stay	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.979	-0.001, 0.001
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.071$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.065$ Log-Likelihood = -407.934 AIC = 821.868, BIC = 833.625					

Figure 4

Mean Number of Violent Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program

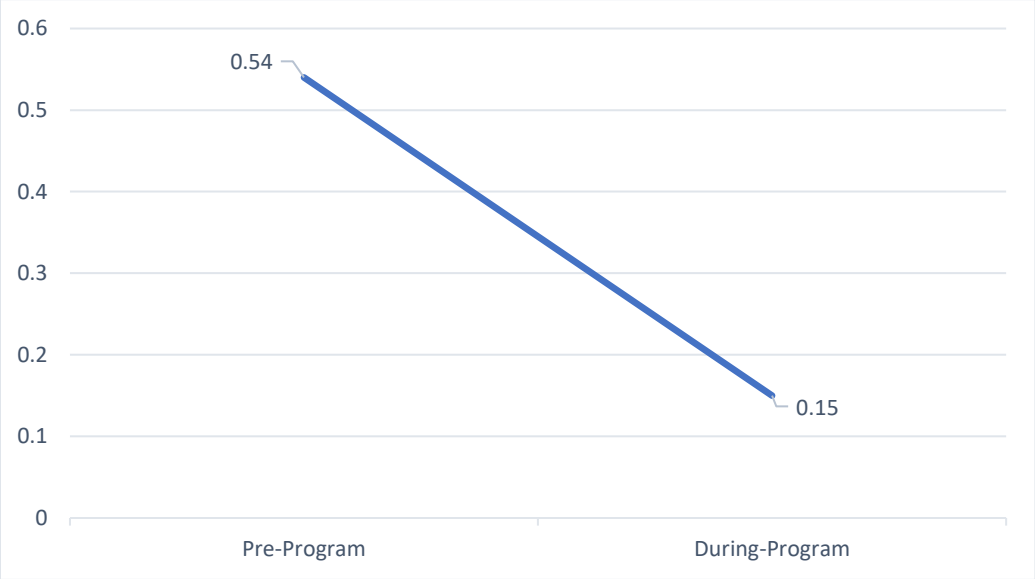
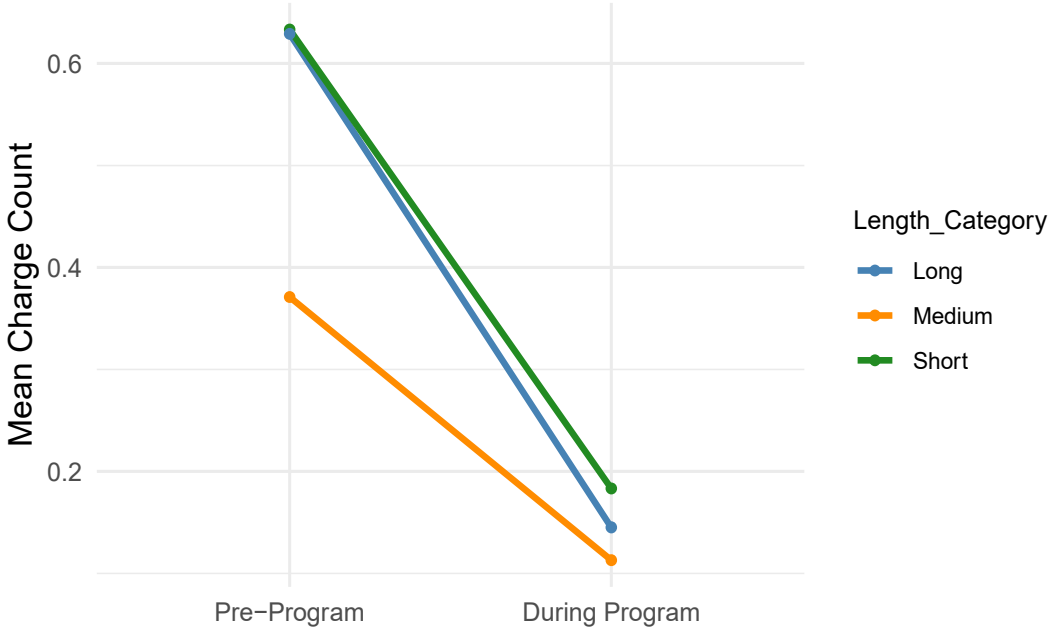


Figure 5

Mean Number of Violent Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Weapon-Related Offense Charges

Table 12 represents the results from fixed-effects regression model for weapon-related offense charges, including the unlawful possession, concealment, or use of weapons, etc. There was a significant decrease in the number of weapon-related charges from the pre-program period to during program participation (B = -0.62, SE = 0.06, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.730, -0.507]). The length of program participation was not associated with the charge counts (B = 0.00, SE = 0.00, $p = 0.119$, 95% CI [-0.000, 0.001]). Figure 6 displays the mean differences for weapon-related offense charges pre- and during the program. The mean number of weapon-related charges decreased substantially from 0.70 in the pre-program period to 0.08 during the program. This marked reduction suggests that participation in the program was associated with a significant decline in youth involvement in weapon-related offenses during the intervention period. Figure 7 displays the mean differences in weapon-related offense charges from the pre-program to during-program periods, grouped by length of program participation. Youth in the Long stay group (204–374 days) had the highest initial mean (approximately 0.83) and showed a substantial decline to near zero. The Medium stay group (123–203 days) also demonstrated a notable decrease from about 0.73 to near zero, while the Short stay group (1–122 days) began at a lower mean (approximately 0.54) and similarly declined to near zero. These results indicate a consistent and significant reduction in weapon-related charges during the program, regardless of length of stay.

Table 12

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for Weapon-Related Offense Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Weapon	Intercept	0.541	0.812	6.605	0.000	0.380, 0.703
	Time	-0.398	0.075	-5.275	0.000	-0.546, -0.249
	Length of stay	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.979	-0.001, 0.001
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.248$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.244$					
	Log-Likelihood = -301.557					
	AIC = 609.114, BIC = 620.870					

Figure 6

Mean Number of Weapon-Related Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program

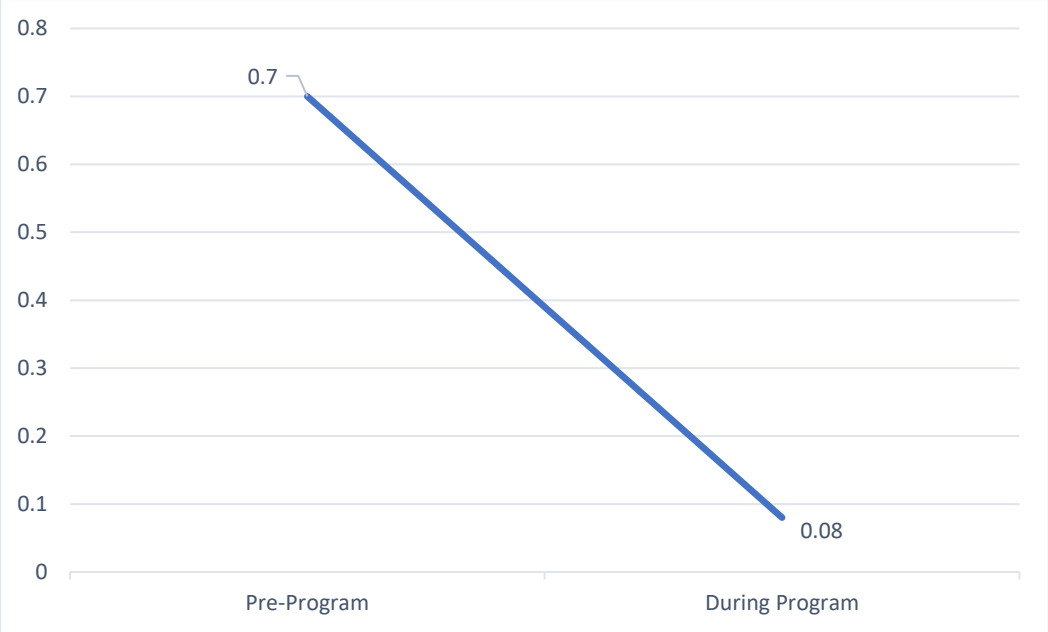
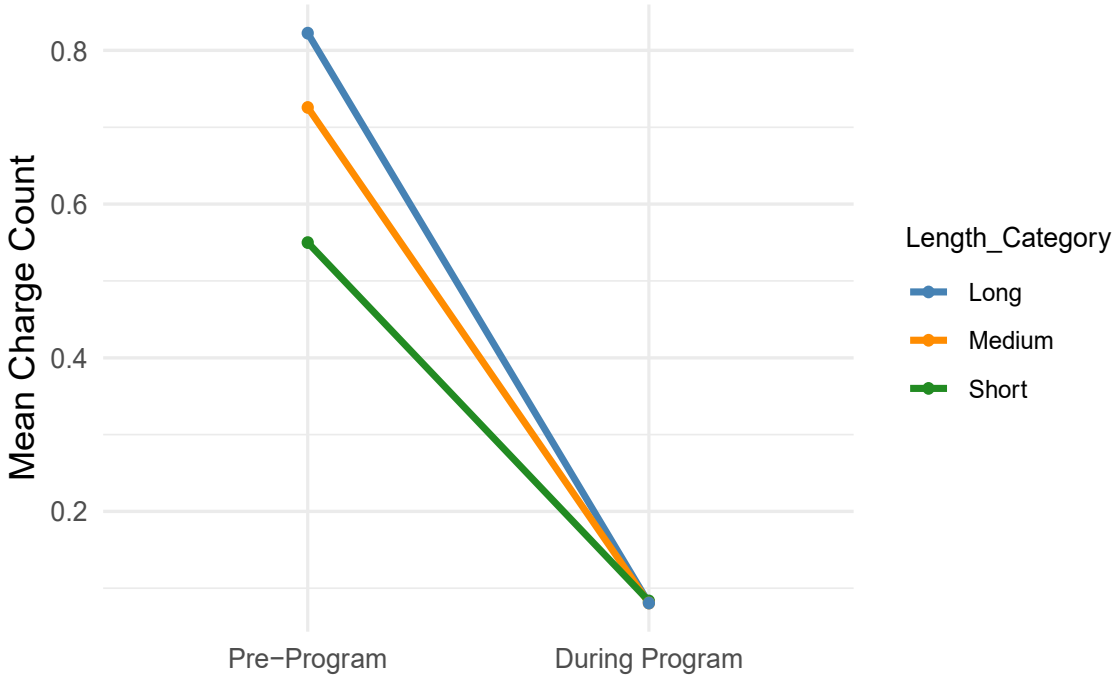


Figure 7

Mean Number of Weapon-Related Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Charges for Violations and Probation or Court Orders

Table 13 presents that the number of violations of probation or court orders decreased during the program (B = -0.07, SE = 0.03, $p < .01$, 95% CI [-0.121, -0.008]). The length of program participation was not associated with the change (B = -7.42, SE=0.00, p=0.958, 95% CI [-0.000, 0.000]). Figure 8 displays the mean number of charges for violations of probation or court orders pre- and during the program. The mean number of charges for probation or court order violations decreased from 0.09 pre-program to 0.03 during the program. This decline suggests that program participation may be associated with improved compliance with legal conditions among youth during the program period. Figure 9 displays the mean differences in the number of charges for violations of probation or court orders pre- and during the program by

length of program participation. The Long stay group (204–374 days) showed a reduction from 0.07 to 0.02 charges. The Medium stay group (123–203 days) declined from 0.14 to 0.05, while the Short stay group (1–122 days) decreased from 0.07 to 0.00. Although initial charge counts were low overall, these reductions suggest that extended program engagement may contribute to improved legal compliance during the program period.

Table 13

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression on Charges for Violations of Probation/Court Orders (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Violation of Probation/ Court Order	Intercept	0.093	0.031	2.968	0.003	0.031, 0.154
	Time	-0.065	0.029	-2.246	0.025	-0.121, -0.008
	Length of stay	-7.421	0.001	-0.052	0.958	-0.001, 0.000
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.013$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.008$ Log-Likelihood = -48.779 AIC = 103.559, BIC = 115.316					

Figure 8

Mean Number of Charges for Violations of Probation/Court Orders

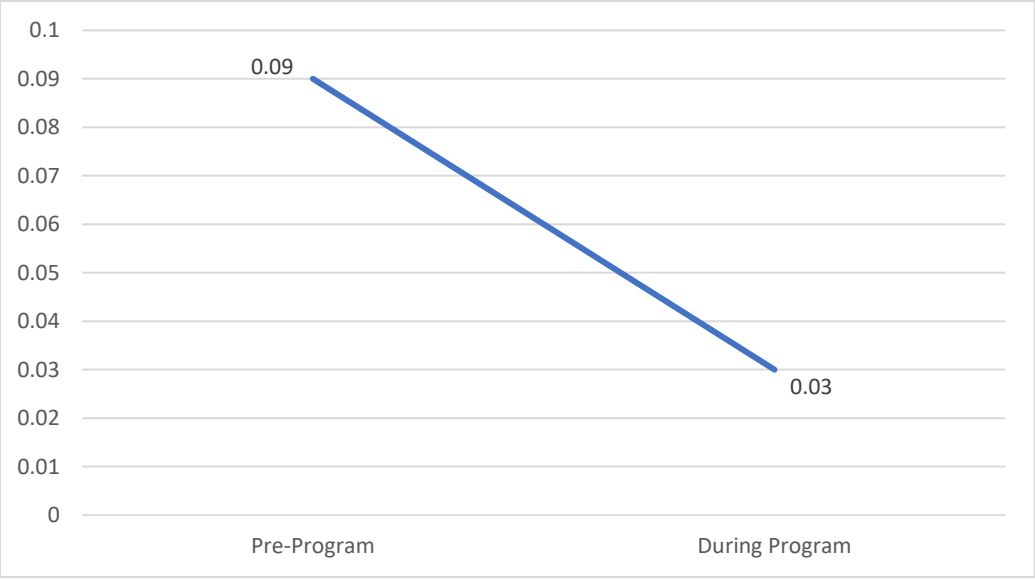
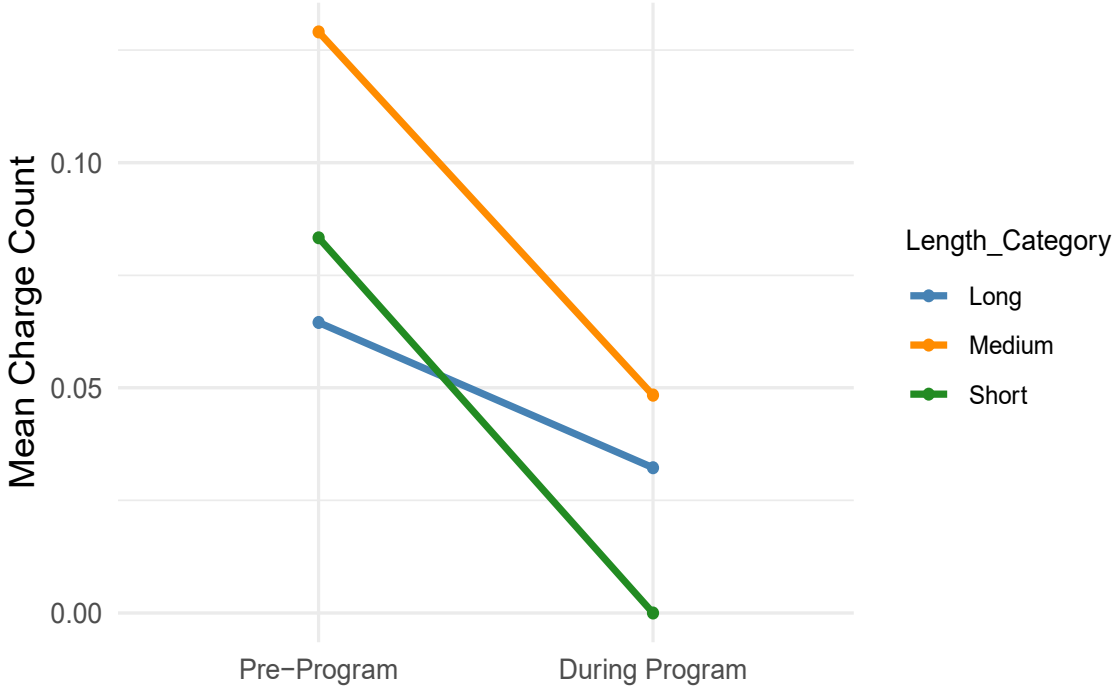


Figure 9

Mean Number of Violation of Probations/Court Orders Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Theft-Related Charges

Table 14 presents the results from fixed-effects regression on charges for theft-related offenses, including attempted burglary, attempted robbery, burglary, possession of stolen property (e.g., vehicle and handgun), petty theft, robbery, grand theft, and related offenses. The results indicated a significant decrease in the number of theft-related charges from the pre-program period to post-program participation (B = -0.74, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.892, -0.581]). The length of program was not a significant predictor for the change in thft-related charges (B = 0.00, SE=0.00, p=0.103, 95% CI [-0.001, 0.001]). Figure 10 displays the mean number of theft-related charges from the pre-program to during program participation. The mean number of theft-related charges declined substantially from 0.82 in the pre-program period to

0.09 during the program. This notable reduction suggests that participation in the program was associated with a significant decrease in youth involvement in theft-related charges during the program period. Figure 11 displays the mean number of theft charges from pre- to during-program participation by length of program participation. The Short stay group (1–122 days) showed a reduction from approximately 0.67 to 0.12, the Medium stay group (123–203 days) decreased from about 0.88 to 0.13, and the Long stay group (204–374 days) dropped from roughly 0.98 to 0.13. These consistent reductions suggest that participation in the program was associated with a meaningful decrease in theft-related charges, with slightly greater reductions observed among youth with longer stays.

Table 14

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for Theft-Related Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Theft	Intercept	0.716	0.086	8.339	0.000	0.547, 0.885
	Time	-0.737	0.079	-9.323	0.000	-0.892, -0.581
	Length of stay	0.001	0.000	1.636	0.103	-0.000, 0.001
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.195$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.191$					
	Log-Likelihood = -425.190					
	AIC = 856.380, BIC = 868.137					

Figure 10

Mean Number of Theft-Related Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program

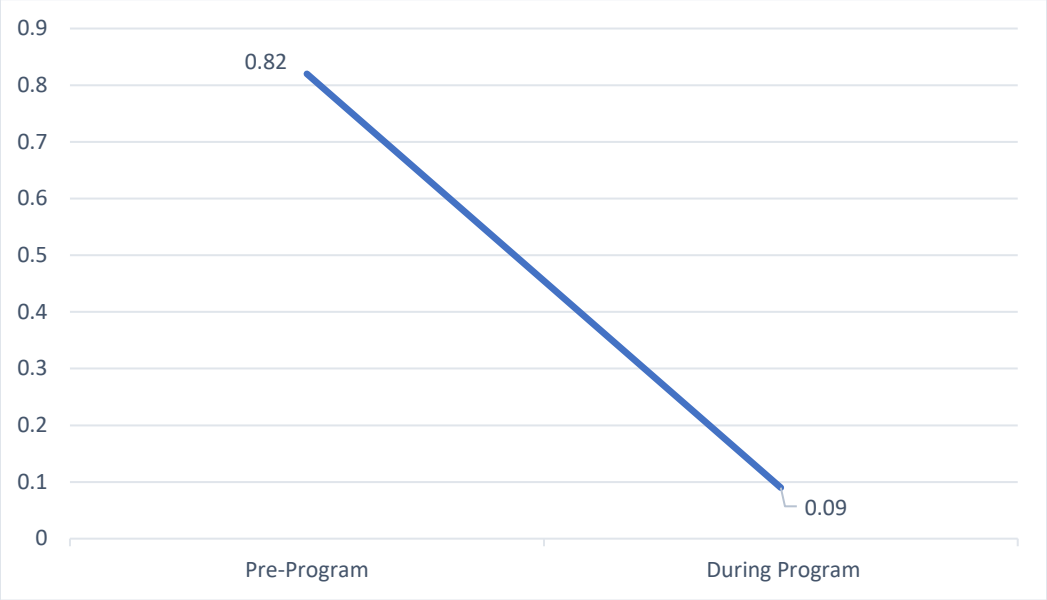
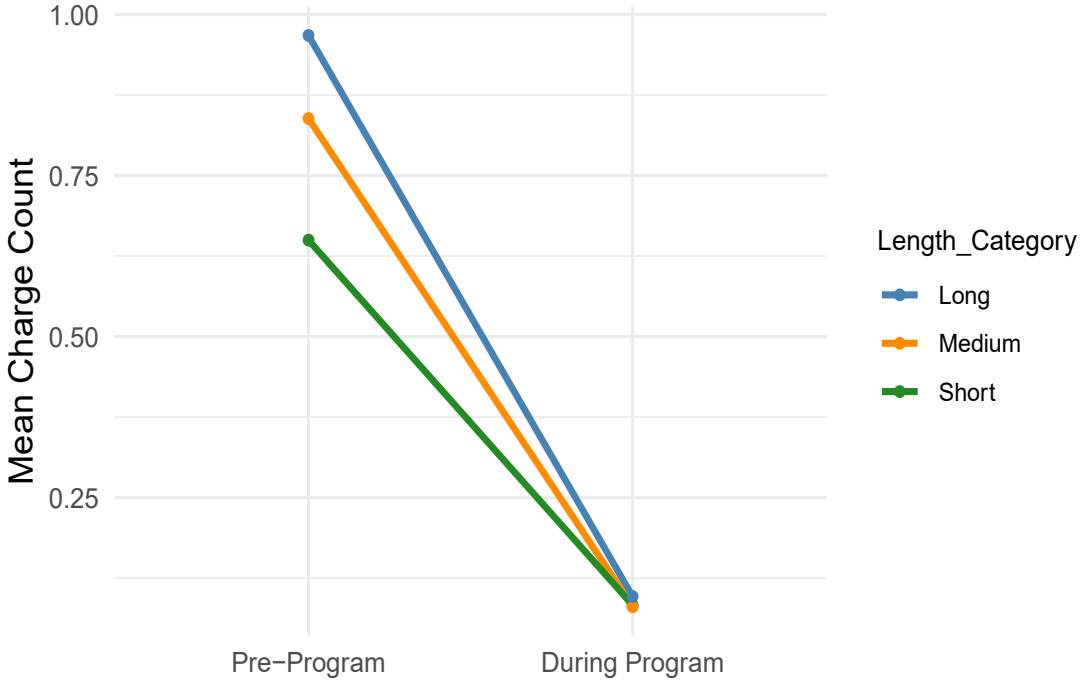


Figure 11

Mean Number of Theft-Related Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Possession-Related Charges

Table 15 presents the results from the fixed-effects regression analysis on possession-related charges, including possession of drugs or alcohol, marijuana, drug use, and alcohol or tobacco use/production, as well as weapons charges, such as carrying a concealed weapon. There was a significant decrease in the number of possession-related charges during the program (B = -0.17, SE = 0.04, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.253**,** **-** 0.080]). The length of program participation was not associated with the decrease (B = 0.00, SE=0.00, p=0.661, 95% CI **[**-0.000, 0.001]). Figure 12 displays the mean number of possession-related charges from the pre-program period to during program participation. The mean number of possession-related charges decreased from 0.18 pre-program to 0.02 during-program. This substantial reduction suggests that participation in the program was associated with a significant decline in youth involvement in possession-related charges during the intervention period. Figure 13 displays the mean number of possession-related charges from pre- to post-program participation by length of program participation. The Short stay group (1–122 days) showed a reduction from approximately 0.1 to 0, the Long stay group (204–374 days) dropped from roughly 0.15 to 0.02, and the Medium stay group (123–203 days) decreased from about 0.31 to 0.04. These consistent reductions suggest that participation in the program was associated with a meaningful decrease in possession-related offenses, with slightly greater reductions observed among youth with longer stays.

Table 15

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for Possession-Related Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Possession	Intercept	0.167	0.048	3.482	0.001	0.073, 0.261
	Time	-0.167	0.044	-3.780	0.001	-0.253, -0.080
	Length of stay	9.574	0.002	0.438	0.661	-0.003, 0.005
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.038$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.033$ Log-Likelihood = -208.174 AIC = 422.348, BIC = 434.105					

Figure 12

Mean Number of Possession-Related Charges Pre- and During the Program

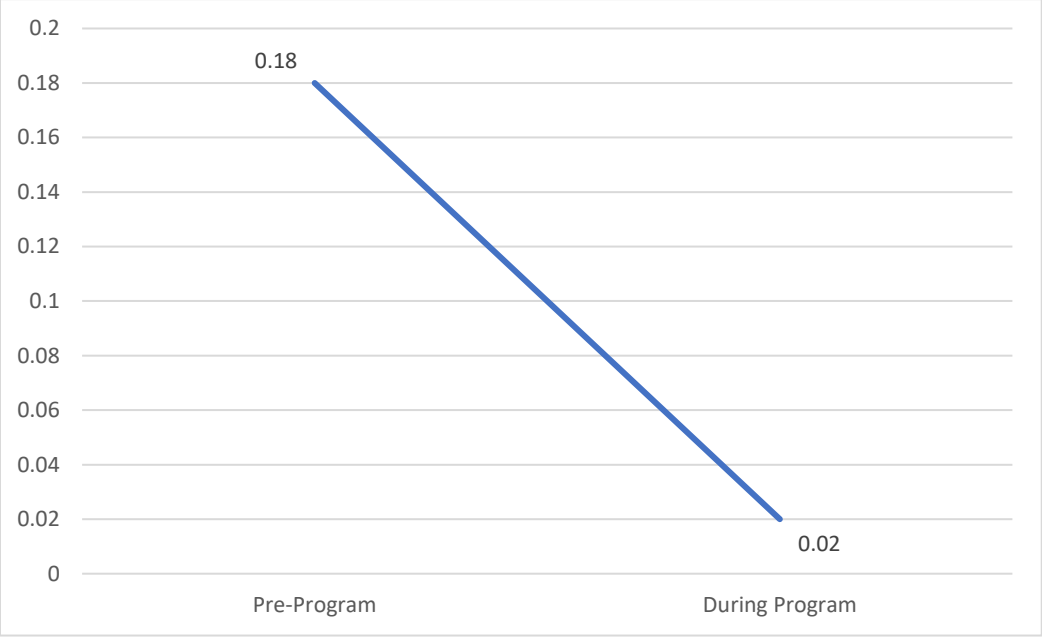
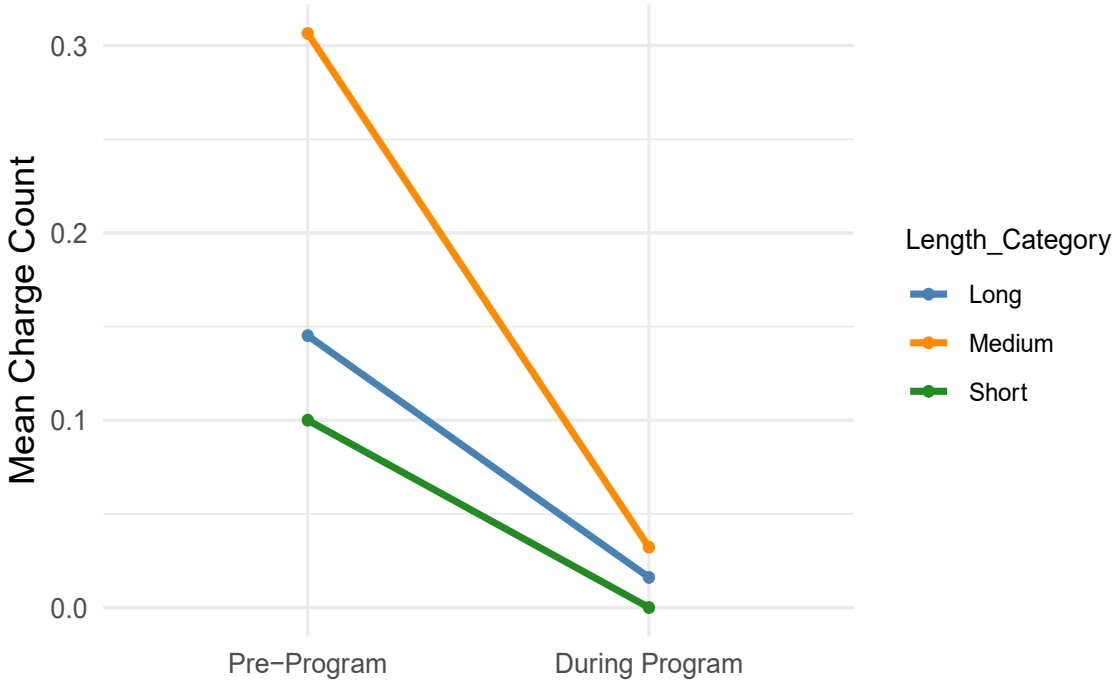


Figure 13

Mean Number of Possession-Related Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Other Charges

Table 16 presents the results from fixed-effects regression on other charges, including arson, criminal trespass, curfew, disorderly conduct, reckless driving, resisting arrest, vandalism, etc. There was a significant decrease in the number of other charges from pre- to during-program participation (B = -0.74, SE = 0.10, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.253, -0.080]). The length of program participation was not associated with the change (B = 0.00, SE=0.00, p=0.188, 95% CI [-0.000, 0.002]). Figure 14 displays the mean number of charges for other offenses from pre- to during-program participation. The mean number of other charges decreased markedly from 0.86 pre-program to 0.12 during-program. This substantial reduction suggests that participation in the program was associated with a significant decline in other types of offenses during the intervention period. Figure 15 displays the mean number of charges for other offenses pre- and

during-program by length of participation. The Short stay group (1–122 days) showed a reduction from approximately 0.8 to 0.1, the Medium stay group (123–203 days) decreased from about 0.78 to 0.12, and the Long stay group (204–374 days) dropped from roughly 1.1 to 0.2. These findings suggest that participation in the program was associated with a consistent and meaningful reduction, especially among youth with longer stays.

Table 16

Results from Fixed-Effects Regression for Other Charges (N = 186)

Charge Category	Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
Other	Intercept	0.755	0.105	7.192	0.000	-0.000, 0.001
	Time	-0.742	0.097	-7.680	0.000	-0.932, -0.552
	Length of stay	0.001	0.000	1.320	0.188	-0.000, 0.002
Model Fit	$R^2 = 0.141$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.167$					
	Log-Likelihood = -499.984					
	AIC = 1005.969, BIC = 1017.725					

Figure 14

Mean Number of Possession-Related Offense Charges Pre- and During the Program

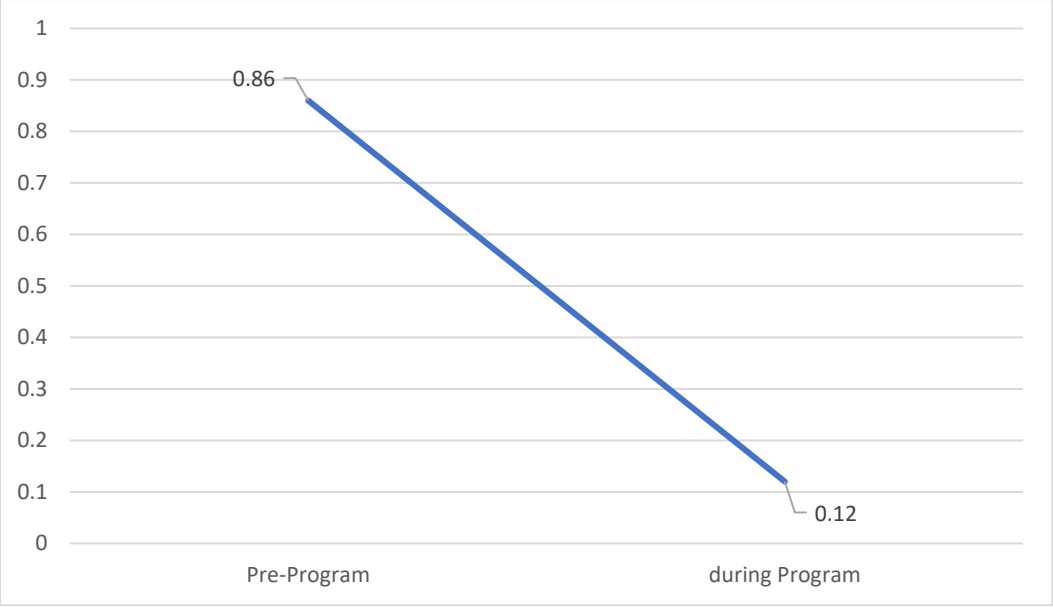
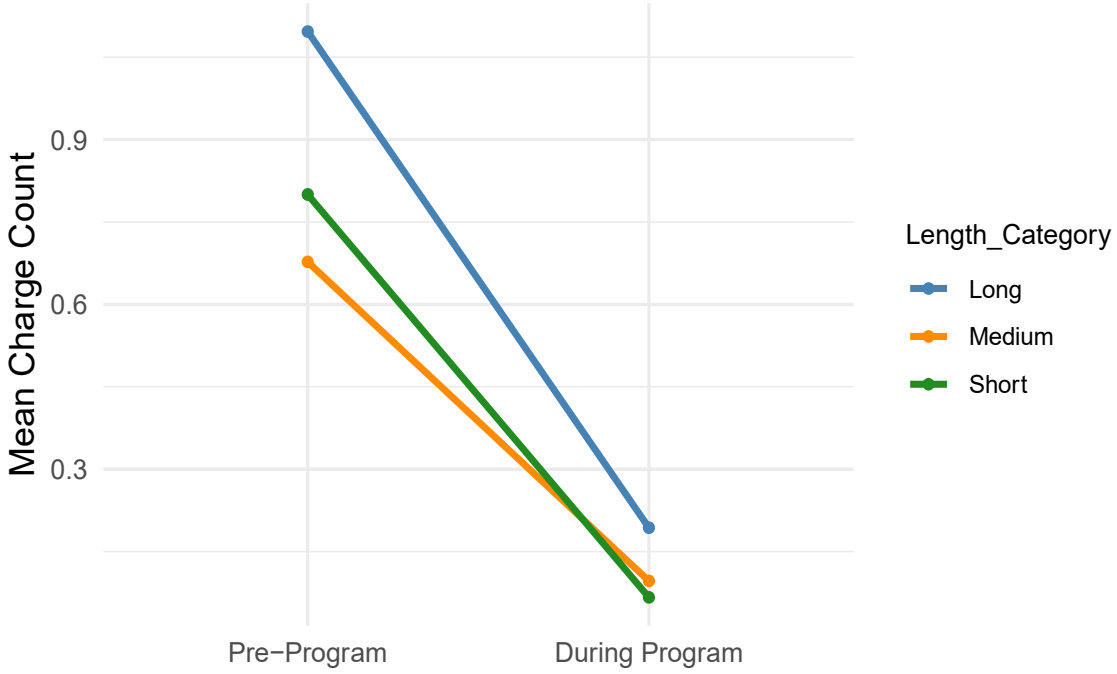


Figure 15

Mean Number of Other Charges Pre- and During the Program by Length of Participation



Chapter Four

Recommendations

In the formative evaluation of the SWITCH Youth program, staff members who participated in qualitative interviews identified key program strengths that may contribute to its overall success, along with areas for potential improvement. Supporting these insights, secondary data analysis of youth outcomes indicated that the program has been effective in reducing behavioral issues among participants during the early stages of implementation.

Recommendations for improving the SWITCH Youth program and its outcome evaluation will be discussed using the CFIR domains as a guiding framework. These categories include 1) *Innovation characteristics*, which pertains to key attributes of the program supporting its success and sustainability; 2) *Inner setting*, referring to the organizational environment where the program operates; 3) *Outer setting*, which involves the broader external environment influencing implementation; 4) *Individual characteristics*, encompassing both those responsible for delivering the program and those receiving services; 5) *Implementation process*, which not only address the steps involved in launching a new program or service but also includes activities related to ongoing evaluation and reflection on implementation efforts.

Recommendations for Enhancing the Unique Features of the Program

Interviews with staff members indicated that the program was effective in many areas and conveyed strong optimism about its potential to reduce youth violence. Staff identified several key features that make the program innovative. Specifically, staff believed that the integration of nationally recognized evidence-based models into the program's core characteristics enhanced their shared understanding of positive outcomes. Staff emphasized that this foundation strengthens the program's legitimacy and ensures access to proven strategies for

behavioral and emotional intervention for at risk youth. However, staff also raised critical insights about the need for cultural and contextual adaptation of those models to better resonate with the lived experiences of Memphis youth involved in violent crime. Youth in Memphis, particularly those impacted by violence, face a set of unique contextual challenges that shape how they engage with intervention programs. Many grow up in neighborhoods marked by intergenerational poverty, systemic disinvestment, and one of the highest violent crime rates in the nation, leading to normalized trauma and chronic exposure to community violence (De Soster et al., 2006; Kravitz-Wirtz et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023). These experiences often foster a deep mistrust of formal systems such as law enforcement, schools, and child welfare agencies.

Despite these adversities, Memphis youth demonstrate strong cultural identity, creativity, and resilience, particularly through music and expressive arts such as rap, and spoken word (Memphis Music Initiative, n.d.). Memphis holds a nationally recognized tradition of Black cultural expression, especially through music (blues, hip-hop, gospel). Language, slang, and cultural references rooted in Memphis subcultures are key to trust-building and authenticity. In these cultural contexts, youth may be more comfortable engaging in creative coping mechanisms, like writing rap lyrics or performing spoken word that can be leveraged therapeutically if acknowledged and integrated. Additionally, youth maintain a strong digital presence, using social media as a primary outlet for expression and social engagement, which serves both as a potential risk factor and a vital engagement opportunity.

Importantly, Memphis Allies has already begun making progress in aligning program tools and documentation processes with the lived realities of youth. A review of their internal documents related to the Journey Map indicates that it is currently under revision as part of the "Core Doc Review" project. These efforts reflect a meaningful commitment to performance

improvement and youth-centered care. This iterative approach also presents a valuable opportunity to integrate culturally responsive engagement strategies into core intervention tools included in GuideTree. By integrating youth-preferred mediums, such as digital storytelling, music production, or visual expression, into existing tools, the program can maintain its evidence-based foundation while increasing relevance and engagement.

Lastly, a hallmark of the SWITCH program is its interdisciplinary approach, where outreach specialists, life coaches, clinicians, and program leadership work collaboratively to support youth with multiple vulnerabilities. Staff emphasized that no single role can fully address the challenges experienced by youth participants. Key to success in an interdisciplinary approach requires shared responsibility and coordinated action so that youth receive the comprehensive support necessary for meaningful progress. Staff consistently described team collaboration as central to the program's success, noting that "the team come together to find viable solutions." This organic problem-solving dynamic reflects the program's strength in leveraging diverse expertise but also highlights an opportunity to formalize and scale this collaborative practice across all teams. Programs with similarly complex interdisciplinary models, such as Wraparound Milwaukee (Bonterra, 2024) or the Los Angeles GRYD program (Kamradt, 2014), have shown that formal structures for collaboration, paired with cross-disciplinary training can increase staff cohesion, reduce service fragmentation, and improve outcomes for youth involved in multiple systems. By investing in these enhancements, SWITCH Youth can solidify its team-based culture and ensure its collaborative approach remains consistent, effective, and scalable over time.

SWITCH Youth has already established regular meetings and communication channels to foster team collaboration. To further enhance collaboration and mutual respect among team

members, the program could invest more in cross-role training modules. These trainings could include basic clinical literacy for outreach specialists (e.g., understanding diagnoses or treatment plans) and field-based safety and engagement training for clinicians who may not have experience navigating high-risk environments. Staff comments about “filling gaps” during team discussions suggest a strong culture of stepping in where needed but also imply the benefit of shared language and mutual understanding. By deepening each team member’s insight into the approaches, limitations, and responsibilities of others, SWITCH Youth can build a more coordinated and resilient support network for youth.

Recommendations for Strengthening Inner Setting

Memphis Allies has made significant strides in launching and supporting the SWITCH Youth program through its investment in ongoing staff trainings, regular meetings, communication channels, and adaptable leadership practices. Memphis Allies has strong community partnerships and extensive organizational resources, which enabled them to prepare for the SWITCH Youth program within a short period of time. Additionally, Memphis Allies' internal infrastructure, such as experienced staff, established protocols, and robust communication systems, further contributed to their capacity to launch the program efficiently and effectively. These efforts reflect a strong commitment to long-term effectiveness and sustainability. However, staff feedback highlights critical areas for continued development to enhance the program’s structural readiness and ability to adapt to the complex needs of youth at high risk of violence involvement.

To increase implementation effectiveness through structure and clarity, SWITCH Youth should build on its existing standardized workflows and service protocols by further formalizing decision-making tools, especially priority matrices to support consistent and timely responses to

complex youth needs such as housing, safety, and crisis intervention. Establishing clear role definitions across outreach specialists, life coaches, clinical specialists, and case managers is also critical for reducing overlap and enhancing coordinated care. Although SWITCH Youth has already established policy guidelines outlining staff roles, these may not yet be fully implemented due to the early stage of program development. Co-developing a role delineation guide with staff input can help clarify role boundaries, strengthen teamwork, and support smoother integration for new or rotating team members.

To build long-term sustainability through targeted investment, SWITCH Youth should expand its existing wellness supports to address the emotionally demanding nature of the work. This could include incorporating regular reflective supervision, burnout screening, flexible scheduling, and enhanced safety planning tools (e.g., real-time assessments and debriefing protocols). Tailored professional development and organizational wellness initiatives play a role in supporting staff retention and reducing burnout in community-based behavioral health and youth programs (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2020). Frontline workers in high-stress, trauma-exposed environments, such as those working with youth impacted by violence or justice involvement, are at elevated risk for emotional exhaustion, secondary traumatic stress, and professional disengagement. Programs that invest in ongoing, role-specific training to match the unique responsibilities and emotional demands of positions like case managers, peer mentors, or clinicians demonstrate stronger staff efficacy and resilience (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2020). Given the emotional labor and safety risks described by staff, SWITCH Youth can reinforce the importance of going beyond general training and toward a strategic investment in customized learning pathways and structural wellness supports. SWITCH Youth could explore expanding current peer care efforts (e.g., wellness check-ins, team retreats) while continuing to

strengthen existing time-off policies. Additionally, offering financial incentives or recognition for staff longevity and weekend crisis coverage may help boost retention and morale. Doing so can increase organizational sustainability, promote staff well-being, and ultimately enhance youth outcomes.

Recommendations for improving outer setting conditions

While these external conditions may not directly influence the day-to-day implementation of the program, staff reflections during interviews offered valuable insights to enhance SWITCH Youth's responsiveness to external challenges and support its long-term sustainability. First, while the outreach component of SWITCH Youth is intended to identify high-risk youth within the community, most participants currently enter the program through court referrals (79%). Staff emphasized the value of outreach activities in the program, noting that youth referred through community-based channels often demonstrate higher levels of engagement than those referred by the court. To support earlier identification and intervention through organic, community-based pathways, external stakeholders, including funders, school systems, and local agencies, should invest in and collaborate on expanding community-based screening strategies for the SWITCH Youth program. This includes fostering partnerships with schools, grassroots youth-serving organizations, and informal community leaders (e.g., coaches, barbers, and local business owners). These stakeholders should be equipped with referral protocols to help them recognize early risk signs and connect youth to SWITCH Youth before crises escalate.

Second, staff voiced concerns about the lack of formal follow-up after youth complete the program. Longitudinal follow-up has been shown to support sustained behavior change in wraparound and multisystemic programs, as continued relational contact can help buffer against relapse triggered by environmental stressors (Bruns et al., 2010). Staff described various

individualized forms for the follow-up formats, including brief check-ins, needs re-assessments, and access to booster services such as housing referrals, job placement assistance, or mental health resources. Implementing a long-term follow-up framework could be significantly strengthened through state-level efforts to develop and maintain integrated administrative data systems that encompass child welfare, education, and juvenile justice records. Such integration enables comprehensive tracking of youth outcomes after program completion, facilitating data-driven decision-making and long-term impact assessment. For example, the Children's Data Network in California has developed a statewide integrated data repository that links child welfare and education data to monitor child outcomes over time (Foust et al., 2020). Similarly, Ohio's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) facilitates the tracking of youth across multiple service systems, improving coordination and outcome assessment (Beal et al., 2022).

Next, staff participating in the qualitative interviews of the program evaluation discussed a range of policy recommendations aimed at improving program effectiveness. One key suggestion focused on implementing youth stipend as a tool to reinforce engagement and encourage positive behavior change. The goal of the stipend is to acknowledge the youth's investment in their own development, rather than to reward compliance. This suggestion is supported by an existing intervention for youth gun violence, Chicago CRED (Create Real Economic Destiny) in which stipends are designed to provide financial support to individual youth who are actively engaged in the program's services (Chicago CRED, n.d.; Northwestern University, 2023). By offering financial compensation, the Chicago CRED program encourages consistent engagement from youth, allows them to focus on personal development, and aids in

the transition from street life to more stable, positive opportunities for school success or employment.

Staff further identified youth employment as a critical area for policy development. This suggestion underscores the need to build a youth employment readiness and placement pipeline with the SWITCH Youth program that not only helps the youth secure jobs but also prepares them to thrive in the workplace. Youth at risk of violence or system involvement often face multiple barriers to employment, including inconsistent school attendance, lack of positive adult role models, and unresolved trauma leading to psychological issues, such as emotional regulation and communication. Given these issues, job readiness efforts must go beyond basic resume workshops and include holistic, trauma-informed coaching that helps youth build confidence, manage conflict, and navigate workplace expectations. Interventions that integrate behavioral coaching with job training for high-risk youth are found to significantly reduce antisocial behavior and promote long-term employment (Heller, 2014). It is important to note that job readiness and placement alone are not sufficient. Retention and progression require embedded emotional and relational support. The program for at risk youth implemented by Roca Inc. combines cognitive-behavioral intervention (CBI) with transitional employment opportunities, intensive outreach, and job coaching (Roca Inc., n.d.). Through the program, youth participants undergo an intentional curriculum that includes life skills, work placement readiness, and personal development, alongside actual employment experiences. The SWITCH Youth program could formalize its employment component by strengthening partnerships with local employers and workforce development boards, offering tiered employment pathways (e.g., internships, apprenticeships), and integrating emotional coaching and case management alongside job placement.

Lastly, staff raised concerns about systemic barriers, including housing instability and access to firearms, and offered insights into policy recommendations to address these challenges. Unstable housing significantly increases youths' risk of poor physical and mental health, exposure to violence, involvement with the justice system, and disengagement from education and employment (Casey Family Programs, 2021). For youth who already experienced trauma, housing instability compounds existing vulnerabilities, leaving them without a safe space to sleep, store belongings, or receive consistent support from adults. Morton et al. (2018) found that homelessness among youth is associated with higher rates of depression, substance use issues, suicidality, and victimization. Emergency housing supports, such as shelter beds, transitional living programs, and housing vouchers, are especially crucial for at risk youth, including those aging out of foster care, returning from detention, fleeing unsafe family environments, or experiencing family homelessness.

Recommendations for Empowering Individual Capacity and Contributions

Staff members' strong identification as part of the community is a significant asset to SWITCH Youth. They shared a variety of strategies for enhancing youth engagement and addressing resistance from both youth and their caregivers. Staff demonstrated that their community ties and personal histories help enhance program engagement and effectiveness. These staff members often share similar life histories, neighborhood experiences, and cultural backgrounds with the youth they serve. These lived experiences enable them to connect with youth who might otherwise resist formal authority. Rather than viewing SWITCH Youth staff as enforcers or outsiders, youth are more likely to perceive them as allies who "get it," individuals who have faced similar struggles and have found pathways forward. This relatability fosters deep trust and opens channels of communication that are often inaccessible through traditional

institutional approaches. Participating staff also noted that some caregivers expressed discomfort and suspicion when interacting with staff perceived as extensions of the court or child welfare system. This resistance stems from fear of judgment, historical mistrust of formal systems, or concerns that the program could disrupt household dynamics or financial dependencies tied to the youth's behavior. Caregiver mistrust and resistance emerged as persistent challenges in the SWITCH Youth program, particularly when staff enter family spaces or accompany youth in the community. Staff emphasized that these connections are not superficial; rather, they are foundational to engagement and intervention. They possess insight into the subcultures, peer dynamics, and street-level realities shaping youth behavior. This local knowledge enables them to identify safety risks, mediate emerging conflicts, and engage youth in a manner that is both respectful and relevant. Staff with lived experience serve as role models, demonstrating that change is possible and that positive life outcomes are attainable, even for those who have faced significant adversity.

The SWITCH Youth program has already demonstrated a strong commitment to recruiting individuals with relevant lived experience, particularly outreach and life coaching roles, as they recognize the value that these staff bring through their deep community ties and cultural credibility. To fully realize the potential of this asset, the next step is to strengthen lived experience not only as a staffing approach but also as a core training and development principle. While lived experience fosters relatability and trust, it must be supported by ongoing training in areas such as trauma-informed engagement, conflict resolution, documentation, professional boundaries, and interdisciplinary collaboration. SWITCH Youth can expand its current training model by integrating tiered learning opportunities, including role-specific competencies, and mentoring systems. By deepening its investment in training, the SWITCH Youth program not

only strengthens the quality and consistency of service delivery; it also builds staff capacity and confidence in implementing core intervention strategies. A well-structured training and support system can also serve as a powerful retention strategy. Staff with lived experience often face high levels of emotional labor and risk burnout without the right supports in place. By investing in their growth and well-being, SWITCH Youth can foster a sense of professional identity, confidence, and long-term commitment among these staff. Structured training communicates that lived experience is not only valued but also nurtured within a clear pathway for professional development, which in turn strengthens staff morale, reduces turnover, and builds a more stable, experienced workforce over time.

Furthermore, staff described relentless engagement as the most important strategy that goes beyond delivering services to intentionally cultivating meaningful, sustained relationships with youth and their caregivers/families. This approach recognizes that for high-risk youth, especially those exposed to trauma and systemic neglect, consistent relational connection serves as a form of intervention itself. Staff described relational trust, emotional safety, and personal presence as core to success, stating, "*The relationship is the intervention*." These relationships are not confined to office spaces or scheduled appointments but are fostered through daily life, on street corners, at homes, on social media, and in moments of vulnerability or crisis. SWITCH Youth's emphasis on relentless engagement aligns with national best practices in youth intervention. For instance, Roca Inc., operating in Massachusetts and Maryland, is widely recognized for its relentless, relationship-first model (ROCA Inc., n.d.). Roca staff are trained to show up repeatedly at homes, schools, jobs, or even courts until the youth begins to engage. This level of persistence, patience, and flexibility mirrors the approach taken by SWITCH Youth.

Currently, specific engagement strategies in SWITCH Youth appear to vary across staff. To scale and sustain this approach, the SWITCH Youth program would benefit from developing individualized engagement plans for each youth, co-designed by both the youth and staff. These plans should go beyond treatment goals to reflect youth preferences around communication styles (e.g., in-person vs. text), personal interests (e.g., music, sports, creative expression), and relational boundaries. Staff shared that positive behavior change is often achieved by identifying what a youth "is naturally good at" and using that strength as a bridge to build trust and encourage participation. Personalized engagement plans offer a structured, youth-centered way to capture and sustain these insights. This strategy promotes agency, deepens connection, and enables staff to tailor their approach based on each young person's unique motivations and comfort levels.

Moreover, these engagement strategies should be sensitive to the diverse needs of subgroups within the program, particularly female youth. During a year observation period, only four female youth (2.2%) were enrolled in the SWITCH Youth program. Female youth often present different patterns of risk and engagement, frequently exhibiting internalizing behaviors such as depression, anxiety, and self-harm, which may not be as readily visible as externalizing behaviors like aggression or defiance commonly observed among male youth (Anderson et al., 2019; Magram et al., 2025; Thomann et al., 2020). Identifying high-risk female youth can be particularly challenging, as their pathways into violence or justice involvement are often shaped by gender-specific experiences such as exploitation, interpersonal violence, and caregiving burdens. Without intentional identification and tailored approaches, these youth may be overlooked or underserved in programs primarily designed around male-centric models of risk and engagement. Integrating gender-responsive strategies into individualized engagement plans,

such as creating safe spaces for girls, providing gender-matched mentorship, and incorporating programming that addresses trauma, self-esteem, and healthy relationships, can further enhance the program's ability to serve female youth effectively. Memphis Allies has already demonstrated efforts to match staff by gender when appropriate, recognizing the importance of representation and comfort in youth-staff relationships. Building on these practices, adopting a more intentional, structured approach to gender-responsive engagement can help ensure that the unique pathways, risks, and support needs of female youth are consistently identified and addressed within the SWITCH Youth program framework.

Recommendations for an Effective Implementation Process

Drawing from the foundational structure of the SWITCH program for adults, the SWITCH Youth program has experienced rapid growth since its launch. While this provided a useful starting point for rapidly evolving to meet the unique and complex needs of youth affected by violence in Memphis, staff reported that the program's fast-paced development has created uncertainty for team members, who must frequently adapt to shifting procedures, extensive documentation requirements, and evolving youth engagement strategies. These conditions have strained staff capacity, contributed to inconsistency in service delivery, and led to fatigue. First, staff in the SWITCH Youth program consistently raised concerns about the heavy burden of documentation requirements, which include detailed session notes, contact logs, treatment plans, and safety assessments. Staff expressed that while they recognize the regulatory and accountability needs behind these documentation processes, the current volume and repetitiveness of the required paperwork detracts from the time and energy they can devote to direct youth engagement. To address these barriers, it is recommended that SWITCH Youth conduct a comprehensive review and redesign of documentation workflows, focusing on

identifying redundancies, eliminating unnecessary data collection, and streamlining processes to minimize duplication. This should include a participatory process that involves frontline staff, supervisors, and leadership to ensure the redesign meeting both regulatory requirements and practical realities of youth work. This process may also be integrated into the organization's ongoing Core Doc Review and Journey Map refinement efforts, which aim to align documentation with the current realities of the youth journey through the program. Incorporating a user-friendly interface into the existing electronic documentation system can help reduce administrative burden. Features, such as mobile access and voice-to-text input, can further enhance efficiency by enabling staff to document in the field or in real time, thereby reducing the lag and cognitive load associated with end-of-day data entry.

Second, SWITCH Youth staff, particularly life coaches, reported continued strain regarding the financial burden associated with supporting youth engagement activities out-of-pocket, including transportation, meals, recreational activities, and supplies. Staff indicated that reimbursement processes are often slow and inconsistent. Such challenges not only diminish staff morale but may also reduce the frequency and creativity of engagement efforts. To address these issues, SWITCH Youth should establish efficient systems for timely reimbursement of staff expenses, including creating streamlined approval processes. Implementing a system that provides staff with activity stipends or prepaid cards for program-related expenditures could significantly reduce their personal financial burden and enhance their capacity for youth engagement. However, such a change would require adjustments to existing financial and administrative procedures, which may involve complex system-level shifts. Recognizing that these adjustments are often challenging and may encounter institutional barriers, this change nonetheless represents an important step toward aligning organizational practices with the

realities of frontline work and fostering long-term staff sustainability. As mentioned above, structured youth stipends or discretionary youth funds tied to participation milestones or prosocial activities could help relieve staff from feeling obligated to personally cover youth needs. These stipends would not only empower youth to take ownership of their progress and engagement but also reduce the emotional and financial pressures placed on staff. Additionally, they would promote healthier relationships between staff and youth by reinforcing professional boundaries.

Next, to reduce disruptions in care caused by turnover or internal promotions, SWITCH Youth should implement standard transition practices. These may include joint meetings between outgoing and incoming staff, structured handoffs, and shared communication strategies with youth and families to ensure continuity and trust. High turnover is a common challenge in youth-serving organizations. To minimize disruptions in youth engagement, Wraparound Milwaukee has built-in mechanisms for staff succession and continuity (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Evaluation Center, 2016). When staff turnover occurs, Wraparound Milwaukee activates protocols that include overlapping case assignments, documented engagement histories, and warm handoffs between outgoing and incoming staff. These practices preserve relational trust with youth and families while maintaining program momentum and fidelity to care plans. The success of these efforts is reflected in outcomes such as decreased use of residential treatment, improved school attendance, and lower rates of juvenile justice involvement (Kamradt, 2000; University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Evaluation Center, 2016). Such evidence underscores how structural clarity and workforce stability are essential to delivering effective, trauma-informed care in high-need populations, which is directly relevant to the SWITCH Youth context.

Fourth, staff reported that many court-mandated youth perceive the SWITCH Youth program as coercive and often resist participation, presenting a significant barrier to engagement. Youth often express mistrust toward schools, law enforcement, and child welfare systems, which they or their families may have experienced as punitive or biased. To address this challenge, the SWITCH Youth program could expand its outreach activities. Outreach is not just a gateway into the SWITCH Youth program. It's one of the most distinctive and impactful components. Models such as Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) reflect a similar outreach philosophy, where informal, repeated engagement precedes structured service delivery (Silva et al., 2020). YAP's outreach staff build informal connections with youth in their communities through repeated, low-pressure engagement before transitioning them into structured services. This "meet before we treat" model aligns closely with SWITCH Youth's strengths and supports a more intentional approach to early engagement. Similarly, Advance Peace employs a fellowship model in cities like Sacramento and Richmond, in which credible messengers engage youth involved in gun violence for several months before introducing them to formal programming (Corburn & Fukutome-Lopez, 2020). These models demonstrate that outreach is not just a recruitment tactic but an essential relational phase of engagement that requires its own infrastructure.

Staff repeatedly emphasized that outreach specialists are often the first point of contact for high-risk youth, building trust through consistent presence, street-based engagement, and deep community knowledge. This early engagement is crucial in identifying youth at risk, reducing barriers to participation, and slowly introducing youth to more structured services such as life coaching or therapy. Despite the critical role of outreach, however, the process remains loosely defined in practice. Staff described outreach as a "steppingstone" to enrollment for some youth but lacked consistent procedures or metrics for guiding or evaluating that progression. To

enhance clarity and consistency, the SWITCH Youth program should formalize the outreach component as a distinct pre-enrollment phase with clear activities, informal engagement goals, and readiness indicators. For example, the pre-enrollment phase could include a flexible engagement period, informal goal setting with youth, and early family/caregiver introductions to begin building a broader support system.

Staff already engage in significant efforts to keep track of youth in the pre-enrollment phase, such as contact logs that track frequency, method, and location of engagement, as well as narrative summaries that capture the nature of interactions and any emerging risks. In addition to tracking actions of outreach staff and the responses of youth over time, the SWITCH Youth program would benefit from establishing outreach success indicators. These indicators, such as the youth's level of openness, consistency in engagement, and willingness to participate voluntarily, assist staff in assessing youth readiness for services and facilitate smoother transitions to formal roles within the program, such as clinical specialists or life coaches. These indicators make the critical but often invisible work of outreach more measurable, valued, and replicable.

Lastly, staff raised critical concerns about the ethical dilemmas they face when documenting sensitive information in the SWITCH Youth program. For example, they worried that over-documenting details, especially in a context where the program receives funding from law enforcement agencies, could inadvertently place youth at risk of further system involvement. These reflections highlight the complex dual roles that SWITCH Youth staff are required to assume. On one hand, they are serving as caring advocates and trusted mentors, while on the other, they are responsible for system accountability and documentation (Dolgoff et al., 2012). This challenge calls for clear organizational guidance on these ethical gray areas, along with

adequate support to help alleviate the personal burden placed on staff. By providing SWITCH Youth staff with ongoing ethics training, reflective supervision, safe spaces for reflection, clear guidelines on confidentiality, and standardized documentation protocols, the program can protect youth from unintended system harms while also safeguarding staff from emotional distress and moral injury. This dual focus is essential for sustaining a relational, community-centered intervention model that also meets necessary compliance and safety standards.

Next Step for an Outcome Evaluation

This formative evaluation of the SWITCH Youth program focused primarily on early implementation processes by exploring staff members' perspectives and experiences, as well as analyzing youth data on individual characteristics and program participation, including the number of charges collected by Memphis Allies before and during the program's first year. While these insights have been invaluable in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in program operations, they offer only a partial view of the program's longer-term impact on youth outcomes and system involvement. To advance toward a rigorous outcome evaluation as the next step, it is essential to expand the scope of data collection to include post-intervention and follow-up measures that capture the sustainability of youth progress over time. To ensure that the outcome evaluation reflects both the realities of implementation and the insights from those closest to the youth, outcome evaluation efforts should assess key indicators that were directly informed by staff reflections during this formative evaluation. Staff emphasized the importance of tracking not only system-involvement outcomes but also broader measures of youth stability and well-being. Specifically, they highlighted youth engagement levels, school enrollment and attendance, job attainment and retention, participation in prosocial activities, and recidivism or rearrest rates as essential indicators of success. These measures reflect the holistic goals of

SWITCH Youth, aiming not only to reduce violence and system involvement but also to foster positive developmental pathways. By centering these identified indicators, the outcome evaluation can provide a more comprehensive and contextually grounded assessment of the program's effectiveness in supporting youth's long-term safety, stability, and thriving beyond the immediate intervention period.

More importantly, the next phase of outcome evaluation must prioritize the inclusion of youth participants' and caregivers' voices to ensure that those directly impacted by the program have meaningful opportunities to share their experiences, perceptions of change, and recommendations for improvement. As staff highlighted during interviews, youth and families are uniquely positioned to provide insights into which elements of the program are most impactful and where gaps remain. Incorporating participatory evaluation methods, such as youth and caregiver surveys and narrative storytelling, will help ground the evaluation in lived experiences and enhance the program's responsiveness to community needs. Many youth participants in the SWITCH Youth program were involved with multiple systems, including child welfare, juvenile justice, and education. This multi-systems involvement underscores the need for cross-system collaboration in both data collection and outcome measurement. State agencies and community partners must work together to create shared data systems and protocols for tracking youth trajectories across sectors. As proposed in the recommendations for improving the outer setting, the development or utilization of statewide integrated administrative data systems would enable longitudinal monitoring of youth progress and provide a better assessment of the program's long-term impacts on safety, stability, and well-being.

Finally, achieving this level of robust outcome evaluation will require not only technical infrastructure and data-sharing agreements but also intentional efforts to build trust among

communities, caregivers/families, and partner agencies to ensure that data are collected, interpreted, and used in ways that are ethical, transparent, and grounded in respect for youth and caregiver/family experiences. This is particularly important given the historical mistrust in systems among many Memphis communities most impacted by violence. By embedding these priorities into the next phase of evaluation, SWITCH Youth can strengthen its evidence base, elevate youth and caregiver/family voices, and contribute to broader learning about effective violence prevention and youth development strategies in Memphis areas.

It is important to acknowledge that Memphis Allies has already made significant investments in building and implementing the SWITCH Youth program under complex and resource-constrained conditions, including developing internal tracking systems and establishing strong partnerships with community stakeholders. These efforts have laid a critical foundation for the program's growth and initial successes. However, sustaining and deepening these efforts, particularly through more rigorous outcome evaluation, will require continued and expanded funding support from public and private sources. Additional investments will be necessary not only to support program implementation and evaluation activities but also to maintain the intensive, relationship-based model that is central to SWITCH Youth's effectiveness. Securing these resources will enable Memphis Allies and its partners to ensure the program's sustainability, fidelity, and long-term impact, while also positioning SWITCH Youth as a model of innovative, community-centered violence prevention for other jurisdictions.

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