

# 2016-2017 Evaluation Plan for New Day Youth and Family Services

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## 1. Introduction

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New Day Youth and Family Services is an organization that has been working to improve the lives of at-risk youth in New Mexico for over 40 years. New Day's programs provide life-building skills, a safe home, and other ventures to help young people stay on a positive trajectory during and after their stay. New Day has chosen to focus their current efforts on building positive relationships among young people and adults and highlighting strengths by adopting the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) and growing and nurturing Inner Wealth, which consists of social and emotional intelligence.

Our evaluation team consists of mentor Ranjana Damle, students Sofia Locklear and Alexandria Lyons, and New Day Director of Operations Brooke Tafoya. Ranjana is a Research Assistant Professor at the University of New Mexico (UNM) Center for Education and Policy Research (CEPR) and has worked on many evaluation projects for public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Sofia Locklear is a PhD student in the Sociology Department at UNM. Sofia's work focuses on race, gender and sexuality, intersectionality, and social justice. Alexandria Lyons is an undergraduate student who became interested in evaluation through working with local nonprofits. She sees the Evaluation Lab as an opportunity to assist non-profit and service organizations like New Day succeed in their mission through examining their processes as well as creating effective outcome measures. Brooke Tafoya is currently the Director of Operations for New Day Youth & Family Services. Brooke has over fifteen years of experience working with youth in various capacities around the country. Currently, she leads and supports four different teams and five programs that serve young people who are experiencing homelessness and are impacted by the juvenile justice, child welfare and mental health systems. The team will be working with the organization through the spring semester of 2017.

The team will use mixed methods that include both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection to explore New Day's unique approach. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine to what extent the NHA is being implemented in the New Day Safe Home, and provide findings and recommendations for program improvement. This evaluation is intended to support New Day's programs and build evaluation capacity of the New Day staff to supplement their expertise.

## 2. Context

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### *A Brief Literature Review*

An important factor to consider when working with at-risk youth is their relationship with the education system. In recent years, schools have increasingly adopted zero-tolerance policies when addressing student misconduct. Mallett (2015) speculates that zero-tolerance policies started evolving during the drug war of the Reagan Administration that cracked down on

anything that could be considered criminal activity in schools. These policies were being implemented by the administration to target the issues around the war on drugs at the time. While aggressive school discipline policies around behavior and drugs are seen as a way to make schools safer, students are often suspended for minor offenses. Although there are incidents of extreme violence, such as gun shootings or extreme physical violence, in schools, these are actually few and far between (Mallet 2015).

Students struggling academically and with test scores often have issues such as attendance, tardiness, or falling behind in class (Curry & Thomas 1999). Too often schools suspend these “trouble students” without considering social and economic determinants of these problems such as household instability. School suspensions due to zero-tolerance policies, without considering school counseling or other help by the community first, may systematically pipeline youth into the juvenile penal systems. This produces a negative labeling of these youth, placing them in a disadvantaged position in the society early on (Lieberman 2014). This process is also regrettably common for students of color and other marginalized identities (Cassidy and Jackson 2005).

Restorative justice is an alternative approach to working with at-risk youth rather than labeling them or subjecting them to zero-tolerance policies. The approach involves bringing the offending youth and victims together and mediating a solution to the satisfaction of all parties, often involving family and community. Instead of jumping immediately to blame and punishment, restorative justice focuses on repairing harm done to both parties involved in an incident and recognizes that the offenders are affected as well (Hopkins 2002). Techniques may include involvement from community and family in helping students understand the feelings behind the offence, and connecting the incident to learning, self-identity, personal strengths and a holistic understanding of all people involved (Vaandering 2010).

The NHA is another example of a more productive way of handling challenging behaviors. The NHA limits the amount of attention given to negative behaviors while noticing and acknowledging even the smallest of positive behaviors, rewriting the negative script that is often used with youth (Glasser and Easley 2008). A longitudinal study found that parents who were trained in the NHA reported gains in wellbeing, decreased yelling, scolding, and negative responses to their children, as well as an increase in recognition of the positive strengths of their children (Brennan and Hektner 2016). The hope is that the use of NHA at New Day demonstrates a different way of interacting with youth that will diminish the effects of labelling and create a positive narrative for youth.

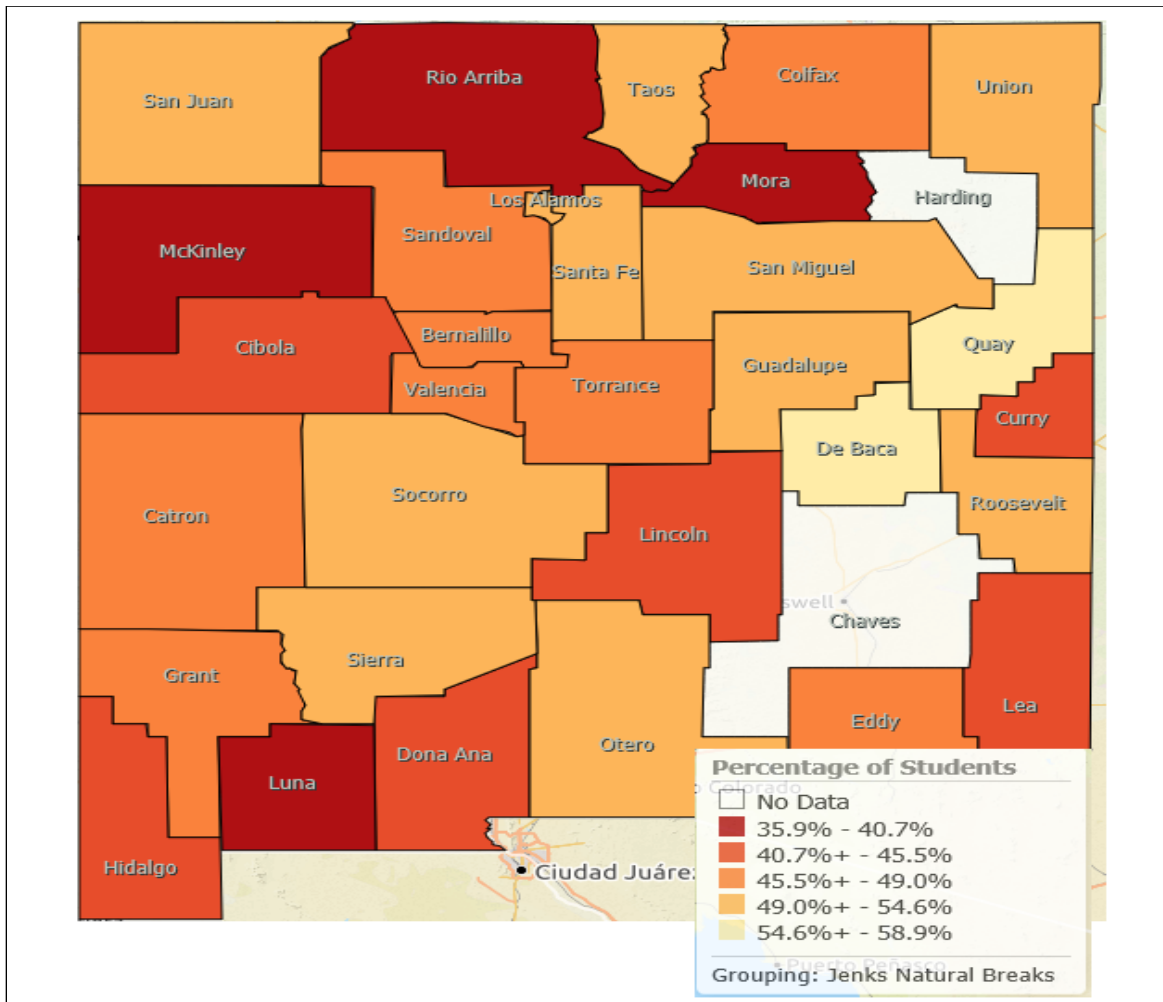
The New Day safe home serves youth ages 11 to 17 and although New Day’s doors are open to youth of all backgrounds, many are members of minority groups, such as youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth. While the circumstances for each youth are different, there are prominent underlying conditions affecting youth in New Mexico that makes the work of New Day especially pertinent. Adolescence is a challenging time for many youth and the data suggests the need and importance for positive adult relationships in the lives of youth. This is one of the

challenges that NHA addresses and suggests that positive interactions with youth can benefit those considered at-risk of undesirable outcomes.

Caring and supportive relationships in the family refer to interactions between youth and their guardians that portray acceptance, affirmation, and love. The youth who have caring adults in their lives do better in school. According to the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRRS 2011), youth who report high levels of this relationship are less likely to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; be involved in violence; or experience suicidal ideation. Many youth seeking shelter at the safe home often feel they are not receiving these type of important relationships from their family.

*Figure 1* shows the percentage of students who felt that they had a caring and supportive relationship in their family, by county. In Bernalillo County, less than half of youth felt they had a caring relationship with a guardian. In McKinley County, only 36 to 40 percent of students had a caring and supportive relationship, and even in De Baca County, one of the few counties with better outcomes, only 54.6 to 58.9 percent of students said they had a caring and supportive relationships in the family. In other words, a minority of students indicated they had caring adults in their life in a large number of New Mexico counties (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Youth With A Caring And Supportive Relationship In The Family, By County



Source: New Mexico Risk & Resiliency Survey 2011, accessed via the New Mexico Indicator-Based Information System, <https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/view/CareSuppRelatFamily.Cnty.html>

With a zero-tolerance policy implemented in many school districts, automatic suspension for youth regardless of the situation occurs immediately. Many youths at the safe home experience difficulties at school. In the state of New Mexico, all racial minorities had higher rates of engaging in a physical fight on school property than did Whites. Blacks had the highest rate at 12.9 percent, Hispanics at 12.3 percent, American Indian/Alaskan Natives at 8.9 percent, and Whites at 8.5 percent. (See figure 2.)

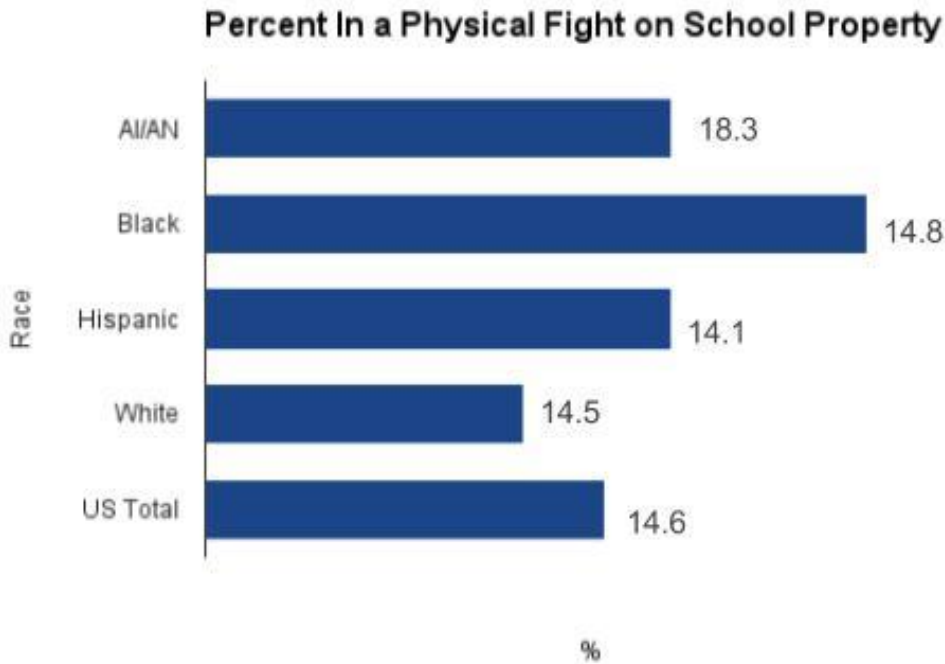


Figure 2: Percent Of Youth In A Physical Fight On School Property, By Race

Source: New Mexico, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015. See Above

As stated above, caring and supportive relationships are important in decreasing suicide ideation, and only about half of youth in New Mexico counties report feeling that they have one of those relationships in their family. The statistics about “plans of suicide” from *Figure 3* illustrate the need for these relationships. An alarming percentages of youth reported having made a plan about how they would attempt suicide. 18.3 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Natives youth, 14.1 percent of Hispanic youth, and 14.5 percent of White youth.

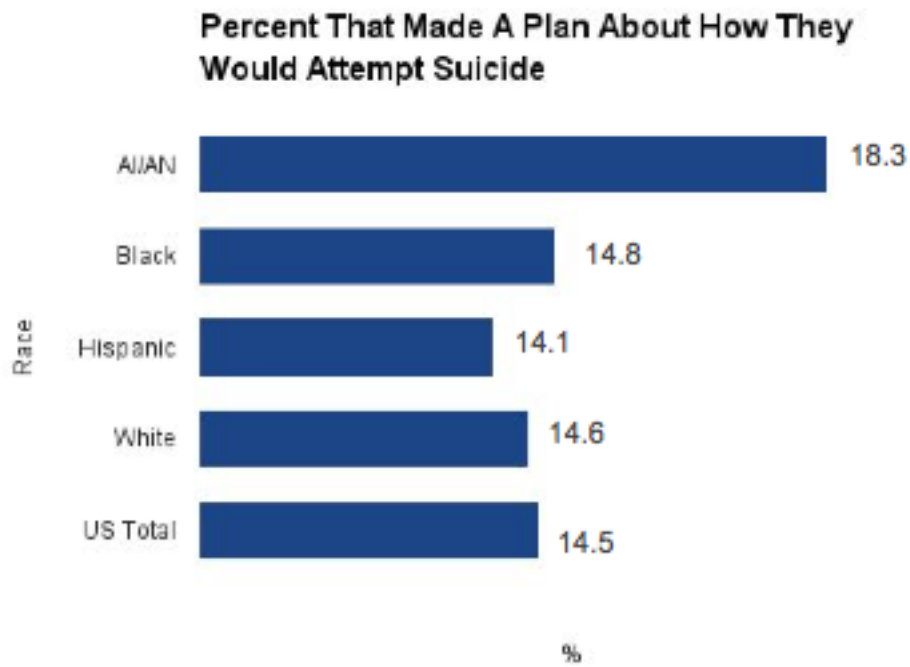


Figure 3: Percent Of Youth That Made A Plan For A Suicide Attempt, By Race

Source: New Mexico, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015. See above.



3. Logic Model

**Logic Model for Nurtured Heart Approach for New Day Safe Home**

Goals	Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Youth Needs: Development of tools measuring 'Inner Wealth' social and emotional intelligence.</p>	<p>Trained employees, psychologists and social workers. CYFD funding as well as grant money.</p>	<p>-Intake, interim, and discharge surveys measuring Inner Wealth. -Positive reinforcement and greatness cards.</p>	<p>For all: Record keeping that includes number of transition emails between staff, attendance of staff and leadership team at meetings, and youth check-ins, which is the communication between staff regarding the youth.</p>	<p>-Youths build and increase inner wealth.</p>
<p>Staff Needs: -Maintaining staff values and knowledge regarding approach -To ensure there is enough training and support for staff -Leadership team maintains values, knowledge and training with NHA</p>	<p>Employee trainings, CYFD funding, leadership team</p>	<p>-Team meetings, communication activities (EOS, team email, crossovers).</p>	<p>-Results of inner wealth surveys -Quality record keeping -Consistent record keeping (Apricot implementation)</p>	<p>-Leadership team is knowledgeable and actively uses NHA with staff. -Staff is knowledgeable and actively uses NHA with youth. -Build and maintain NHA outcomes</p>

Shelter Needs: Understand perspectives of everyone working/living in safe home.	UNM Evaluation Lab	-Youth centered meetings -Focus groups with leadership team, staff, and youth	Results from focus groups	-Providing youth with tools for Inner Wealth even when they leave New Day
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The Nutured Heart Approach focuses on building inner wealth through powerful relationships that focus on what young people are doing right and minimizing relationship and energy around what is not working. The approach is not only used with child-adult relationships, but can be used for all. New Day chooses to use this to help the youth build these positive relationships in the hopes that they will leave the shelter with a greater sense of Inner Wealth. The staff uses this with the youth on a daily basis by pointing out their strengths. NHA is also used to help guide the youth through tough behavioral situations. The staff also gifts young people with “Greatness Cards”, which are index cards that are written by staff that let them know about the qualities of greatness they saw in them and the evidence that supports that greatness. The team believes that the NHA is an important key in supporting the positive trajectory of youth.

The executive leadership aims to maintain the NHA culture in the entire organization and encourages the staff and the leadership team to use this approach among themselves and with each other.

The logic model was informed by our evaluation team and prepared by Sofia and Alexandria. The information was gathered during the team meetings and the primary information came from meetings with Brooke Tafoya regarding the goals of using the NHA in the safe home. Our process was to make a model regarding what we learned in meetings and the documents provided to us. The team, including Brooke, later came together to finalize the logic model.

#### 4. Evaluation Plan

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This evaluation will address the following questions.

To what extent is the NHA being implemented in the New Day Safe Home?

*Are the youth experiencing NHA and building Inner Wealth?*

*Activity A:* The evaluation team will build survey tools that measure Inner Wealth. The tool will be based on existing scales in the field that include questions about social and emotional intelligence. The team will develop a long form with 10-15 questions and a short version with five (5) questions pulled from the longer version. The short form is necessary, as it will be used on intake along with the multitude of other forms that youth have to fill out. The short length will ensure completion while collecting key information. The long form will be used at two-weeks, one-month, and two-month intervals to collect more detailed information. The survey data will be used by New Day to see if the youth are making progress, and if the youth recognize or are building Inner Wealth. New Day will implement the survey when they switch to their electronic database in early 2017.

*Activity B:* Youth focus groups that will be conducted in the beginning of February 2017. Questions will be focused around their experience in the safe home, observations of any positive changes within themselves as well as positive differences with other institutions they have interacted with. We hope to glean if the youth are learning about their personal strengths, and explore what New Day could do to better build an environment that focuses on strengths and positive experiences. Youth of different lengths of stay, different genders, and different ages who are all currently residing in the Safe Home will participate. The data from the focus group will be coded and used to address the evaluation questions.

*Activity C:* Review all pertinent documents such as “Greatness Cards” and any other NHA related material that the safe home uses.

*What strategies does the New Day Safe Home use to create and sustain a culture of the NHA?*

*Activity A:* Youth Focus Group: See B above

*Activity B:* Staff Focus Group: Conducted the beginning of February 2017. Questions will focus on staff members’ own definitions of the NHA, their experience of using the NHA with the youth, what types of trainings and how much would be useful to aid in consistency of the NHA, challenges and positive attributes, and if their supervisors also use the NHA approach with them. The data from the focus group will be coded and used to address the evaluation questions.

*Activity C:* Leadership Focus Group: Conducted the beginning of February 2017. Questions will focus on the individuals on the leadership team own definitions of the NHA as well as their experience with using the approach including frustrations, positive stories and needed improvements. Questions will also gauge the use of NHA at all levels of the safe home as well as how fully implemented they think the approach is in the safe home. The data from the focus group will be coded and used to address the evaluation questions.

*Activity D:* Review all pertinent documents such as “Greatness Cards” and any other NHA related material that the safe home uses.

Before all activities begin, the team will review the human subjects protocol with the focus group participants. Also, the consent forms for focus groups will be read aloud and verbal consent confirmation received before proceeding.

The UNM IRB has determined that these evaluation activities do not qualify as research and therefore are not overseen by the IRB. The UNM Evaluation Lab has its own principles of confidentiality, an important one being that no youth, staff member, or leadership team member will be identified, information provided to the organization will be in aggregate form, and all participation is voluntary.

The UNM Evaluation Lab Policy Committee has discussed the particulars of interviewing the youth in the safe home and decided that it is ethical to interview the youth without parental permission as many of these youth are seeking refuge from their parents and unsafe situations at home, demonstrating a high level of agency on the youth’s part. It is respectful to let the youth

decide for themselves if they would like to participate. The questions focus on activities within the safe home and no other aspects of their lives. In case anyone becomes upset or emotional during the focus group, staff members will be in the next room if needed.

## 5. Timeline

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Define Inner Wealth Survey measurements: ***January 2017***

Survey implementation: ***February 2017*** or at New Day's discretion

Youth Focus Group: ***Second week of February 2017***

Staff Focus Group: ***Second week of February 2017***

Leadership Team Focus Group: ***Third week of February 2017***

Analysis & coding of focus group results: ***Feb-March 2017***

First draft of final report to New Day: ***Mid-March 2017***

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