

2016-2017

The Nurtured Heart
Approach for New
Day Youth and
Family Services

May 18, 2017



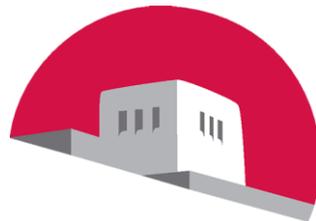
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Day Youth and Family Services has been working to improve the lives of at-risk youth in New Mexico for over 40 years. New Day provides a life-building skills academy, a safe home, and other ventures to help young people successfully pursue positive life trajectories. In the last few years, New Day has committed to building positive relationships with young people and adults by adopting the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA). NHA is a well-regarded strengths-based parenting strategy that focuses attention on positive behaviors and limits attention to negative behaviors. New Day has adopted NHA with the hope that a radical shift in the kind of attention that youth receive -- “a rewriting of the negative script” they are accustomed to hearing -- will help them build inner strength and develop coping skills that will serve them after they leave the safe home.

The Evaluation Lab worked with New Day Youth and Family Services to evaluate the implementation of the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) at New Day’s safe home for youth. ***The evaluation team assessed the extent to which NHA had been adopted at the safe home in all interpersonal interactions, including interactions between youth and staff, staff and staff, and staff and management. The team held three focus groups: one each for youth, staff, and the leadership team.***

The focus groups revealed that youth appreciate the positive way they are treated at New Day, that staff are enthusiastic about NHA as a way to support youth, and that NHA suffuses New Day at all levels, including staff interactions with other staff, staff interactions with outside agencies, and management interactions with staff.

Although the use of NHA is not made explicit to youth, participants in the youth focus group repeatedly used NHA language, including “authenticity” and “emotional intelligence.” They were also eager to tell the facilitators about their “greatness cards,” a New Day adaptation of the NHA emphasis on providing positive verbal feedback. Because of the limited time youth have at the safe house, New Day leadership had the idea of providing written feedback on index cards, as a way of reinforcing the positive messages they wanted to convey. ***Youth focus group participants shared that New Day has helped them improve their “emotional intelligence” and “self-advocacy,” suggesting that the use of NHA offers youth an opportunity to see themselves in a new, positive light.***

The other focus groups revealed a common and accurate understanding among the staff and leadership at New Day about using NHA. Staff members were enthusiastic about NHA, and could point to specific experiences that demonstrated NHA’s effectiveness with youth at the safe home. Several attested to NHA’s effectiveness in their personal lives as well. The leadership team focus group participants were also enthusiastic about NHA, and reported that the approach promoted positive

interactions between staff and youth and between staff and supervisors. Leadership team participants also reported that NHA promoted more effective interactions with partnering agencies, including the state Children, Youth and Families Department, which in turn led to better outcomes for youth. And, equally gratifying, the leadership repeatedly observe youth using NHA with each other.

The team concluded that New Day has successfully integrated the NHA into its culture, and that the practice is sustainable so long as it continues to be supported.

Focus group participants had two suggestions for improving the implementation of NHA. First, both youth and staff thought there needed to be more consistency in what behavior and activities are and are not acceptable, and that the NHA “absolute no” should be consistent across shifts. Second, staff and leadership recommended more formal training, especially to support the use of NHA in crisis situations.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Work Performed.....	2
3. Data Analysis.....	3
4. Strengths and Suggestions.....	8
5. Next Steps	8
Appendix A: Implementation of NHA in the Safe Home	10
Appendix B: New Day Focus Group Guides	13
Appendix C: Focus Group Written Activities	16
Appendix D: Staff and Leadership NHA Definitions	19
Appendix E: Informed Consent for Focus Groups	21

1. Introduction

New Day Youth and Family Services has been working to improve the lives of at-risk youth in New Mexico for over 40 years. New Day provides a life-building skills academy, 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 and is an important piece that the NHA aims to develop.

Our evaluation team consisted 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 other local nonprofits. 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 worked with New Day during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters.

The team used qualitative techniques of data collection to explore New Day's adoption of the NHA. The purpose of the evaluation was 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. Appendix A provides documentation of how New Day promotes NHA throughout the organization.

The NHA is an example of a 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, and a decrease in 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 New Day's NHA interactions with youth will change the effects of negative 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. Adolescence is a challenging time for many youth and data suggest 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 adults can benefit at-risk youth.

2. Work Performed

The UNM team conducted three focus groups. The team compiled a list of questions in collaboration with the Director of Operations, Brooke Tafoya, to ensure coverage of all needed areas. The questions focused on examining the implementation of the NHA within the safe home as it pertained to all three levels – youth, staff, and leadership team. Questions captured NHA implementation issues unique to each level. The focus groups were each one hour long, with six to ten participants. At the beginning of each focus group, and following Evaluation Lab protocols, a team member read a verbal consent form that let participants know that:

- 1) they would not be identified to the organization,
- 2) they were free not to share their opinion in any activity or question,
- 3) that the session staff and leadership sessions would be recorded only if no one objected, that, if executed, the recording would not be shared with the organization and that it would be deleted after it was used to correct our written notes. The youth focus group was not recorded.

All of the focus groups included a variety of large group and small group discussions and written activities. See Appendix B.

For the youth focus group, the strategy was to elicit reflections on how youth experience the safe house, to see if they recognized and appreciated a difference in how adults interact with them. Although staff use the concepts of Inner Wealth and social and emotional intelligence in interactions with youth, youth are unaware that these concepts are part of a particular communication strategy. Focus group questions and activities sought to determine whether the youth had learned anything about themselves while at New Day, how they might have changed in the growth areas that NHA emphasizes, and feedback on the safe house.

The staff focus group had ten participants, a very good showing considering that staff work different shifts around the clock. The leadership team had six participants, representing nearly all levels of New Day's operations. In both of these focus groups, participants provided written statements of their understandings of NHA, shared the challenges they faced in using NHA and considered what is needed to create a lasting culture of NHA at New Day. See Appendix C.

After conducting each focus group, the UNM team members reviewed their written notes together to come up with a definitive record. They also reviewed the recordings

of the staff and leadership team focus groups to assure the accuracy of their notes. The team then coded the qualitative data by identifying themes within and across the focus groups.

The team conducted the youth focus group on February 17, 2017, the staff focus group on February 22, and the leadership focus group on February 23.

3. Data Analysis

Youth Focus Group

Ten youth participated in the focus group. The youth were chosen by the safe home staff based on availability. The group included a wide variety in length of stay and familiarity with the safe home, with stays as short as one week and as long as 60 days at the time of the focus group; one youth was at the shelter for the third time. Although the focus group questions used no specific language or reference to NHA, the youth continually made references to the “empowerment,” “respect,” and “authenticity” they experienced when interacting with the staff at the safe home. When asked what made New Day different from other shelters, the youth discussed how they felt cared for as people instead of simply just “clients,” and, most importantly, that New Day feels comfortable like a family and a home.

It also became clear that the youth felt they were valued as whole people and their strengths were recognized, a key tenet of NHA. At one point in the focus group, a youth ran out of the room and returned with a stack of “greatness cards” that staff had given the youth. Greatness cards are an NHA strategy to recognize strengths and positive behaviors. This prompted all the youth to talk excitedly about how they love and keep every single greatness card given to them, even after they leave the safe home. The great value that youth place on the cards demonstrates the importance and meaningfulness of receiving positive recognition. The youth then described how the greatness cards and interactions with the staff have increased their “emotional intelligence” and “self-advocacy,” as well as taught them to “make choices, head on, and (be) fully conscious of possible outcomes.”

*“I keep all my
greatness cards, I like
knowing what I do
good every day.”*

~a youth participant

Youth had several suggestions for improving the New Day safe house. First, they thought that staff need to have a more consistent way of handling arguments and “saying no,” as it the rules seem to change from shift to shift and vary by staff member. They advised that each staff member have the same definition of what is allowed or not, the same thresholds for “yes” and “no.” Second, they recommended that the length of stay be extended and the number of beds increased. Third, they thought more activities should be available to them outside of the safe home.

The facilitators were impressed by the enthusiasm expressed for New Day. The youth stated that New Day was the best shelter compared to anywhere else they had ever stayed, and suggested that more shelters like New Day be created.

<i>Key Quotes from the Youth Focus Group</i>
<i>“New Day is my favorite place to stay out of all the shelters, and I’ve been to all of them. That’s why I keep coming back.”</i>
<i>“Whatever choices you make, I learned it’s good to make them consciously.”</i>
<i>“New Day has taught me to be resilient to my surroundings.”</i>
<i>“New Day feels like an actual home and family compared to other shelters!”</i>
<i>“I have learned I can deal with my anger in better ways.”</i>
<i>“I have become more emotionally intelligent.”</i>

Staff Focus Group

Ten staff members whose tenure at New Day ranged from 4 to 20 months participated in the focus group.

When asked to write their personal definitions of the NHA. All staff had similar definitions of NHA that strengths, minimizing negatives, and building inner wealth. See Appendix D for definitions provided.

In general, the staff found great success in using NHA with the safe home. It was a unanimous sentiment that using the NHA with youth who usually only have negative interactions with adults, can be challenging and confusing at first. Yet, the consensus in the focus group was that once the youth became used to positive reinforcement, their negative behaviors decreased and they often could “visually see self-worth increasing” and that NHA “builds power within” over time. The staff, over time, also observed that youth adopt NHA language when interacting with each other and staff.

The staff unanimously agreed that more frequent formal trainings would help with learning and implementing NHA. At the same time, several staff members mentioned that they had experienced unexpected “training” in NHA when they practiced it in their personal lives, and when they used it for reflecting on their progress with NHA. Several staff members reported that they use NHA in their own lives and that they have seen significant positive change in their daily outlook on life and in their feelings of self-worth. Staff with longer tenure at New Day felt that the feelings of “burnout” decreased as the implementation of NHA in the safe home deepened.

An improvement that staff called for that echoed youth suggestions was that of having consistent policies on unacceptable behaviors. The staff would like for all supervisors to have the same definition of an “absolute no,” as it seems that rules and expectations vary among supervisors and shifts. Staff particularly thought that a “solid line” between “yes” or “no” would be extremely useful. Another critique was that the staff felt that if a youth had been “given up” on or was set to leave the safe home, if even one supervisor stopped using the NHA with that individual, then everybody else did as well.

The staff focus group seemed not only to be a focus group but also a bonding hour for those from different shifts as they mentioned it was rare for them to all be together. One participant became emotional and shed tears of gratitude for her fellow staff members, NHA, and New Day. She felt it really makes a significant difference in the youths’ lives to be able to provide them with a positive and safe environment, which they often do not receive anywhere else. It was a very powerful moment in a very powerful focus group in which, above all, it became clear that the NHA is effective, fairly well implemented at New Day, and is more than just something routine at work. To the New Day staff, NHA appears to be a meaningful way to handle situations even in their personal lives. This suggests that staff are fully on board with the NHA.

“New Day is great place to work because we really focus on the emotional wellbeing of the youth and each other.”

~ a staff participant

<i>Key Quotes from the Staff Focus Group</i>
<i>“On a personal level, the Nurtured Heart Approach changed my life once I started using it outside of work as well.”</i>
<i>“The Nurtured Heart Approach is powerful; it helps us provide a safe haven for the kids here.”</i>
<i>“The Nurtured Heart Approach takes away the hierarchy with the youth and helps us interact as humans and people instead of adults treating ‘bad kids’, and that’s when the healing starts.”</i>
<i>“There are always a few youth that you make a great connection with through the Nurtured Heart Approach. One that sticks out is a young lady we had at our shelter about three months ago. When she arrived her CYFD worker let us know that she would run as soon as she got the chance. Her life story was one of the worse we have seen. Through honesty and NHA she stayed a full three months and was adopted. I truly believe without New Day and the Nurtured Heart Approach she would not have made it.”</i>

Leadership Team Focus Group

Six leadership team members, including the Director of Operations, the safe home Program Manager, and shift leads participated in the focus group. Like the staff and youth, the leadership team expressed enthusiasm for the culture of NHA at New Day. The length of employment for those in the focus group ranged from 2 months to 3 years.

The leadership team provided written definitions consistent with the main NHA tenets of emphasis on positivity, strengths, and inner wealth. See Appendix D for definitions provided.

The leadership team works both in the safe home and the administrative offices located in different buildings. The team members stated that they see and feel the NHA being used in their administrative offices as well as the safe home, demonstrating its implementation in all parts of the organization. The leadership team felt that the NHA was effective in providing clarity, building happiness in the youth, and allowing transparency. Overall, they felt that NHA is a “strong dynamic” in the organization and makes a significant difference not only for the youth but for the staff as well.

“[The Nurtured Heart Approach] was the first thing I noticed about working here, from the way that the youth is treated by the staff to the way management supports the staff, and I ...see it in the administrative offices as well, it is dynamic in the company.”

~ a leadership team participant

A recurring sentiment in the focus group was that NHA is also an effective communication strategy for working with outside agencies, including the Child, Youth and Family Department (CYFD). The leadership team reported that several outside agencies “prefer youth to come to New Day.” For example, Child Protective Services said that they send “harder” youth to New Day because they seem to flourish at New Day compared with other shelters. The leadership team repeatedly indicated that individuals seek work at New Day because they have heard that it is a “positive work environment” with respect to both management and youth attitudes.

During the focus group, several participants observed that the youth pick up the language and skills used with the NHA and implement it with each other. This observation aligned with a similar one from the staff focus group, and the reiteration solidified the assertion that youth react positively to the NHA. At the end of the focus group, the leadership team was asked, “On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being full implementation, where do you think New Day stands in implementing the NHA?” The average score was 7, demonstrating the strength of NHA in New Day as well as room for growth.

Focus group participants noted that maintaining NHA in high stress and crisis situations can be difficult. When in crisis mode, it can seem difficult to use the

approach in a concrete way. A possible remedy is to conduct more frequent and formal trainings that include concrete examples of how to use NHA when in crisis situations. Participants also noted that self-care was critical to continuously and effectively use the NHA. Self-care is defined as care provided for oneself by oneself and identifying needs and taking the steps to meet those needs. It is about self-nurturing and taking care of oneself. Finally, the group noted the importance of supporting each other and allowing fellow staff and team members to take a step back and “reset” to prevent burnout.

<i>Key Quotes from the Leadership Team Focus Group</i>
<i>“Out of all the places I have worked, my experience with New Day and the Nurtured Heart Approach is that it is systemic and across the board at New Day.”</i>
<i>“The Nurtured Heart Approach is a logical extension of strength based and trauma informed practice, it is a great fit for New Day.”</i>
<i>“We had a team meeting that developed into a shouting match between a young person and the probation officer that was going in the “you’re going back to jail” direction. And through recognizing how deeply both parties cared for the young person’s future and some clarity around what was actually happening we avoided jail and had a successful discharge a month later.”</i>

The evaluation team concludes that NHA is widely used throughout New Day. Staff and leadership demonstrated enthusiastic “buy-in” for the approach, since they have experienced how positively youth respond. The leadership reported that the approach is also effective in working with outside agencies, and several staff members reported its effectiveness in their personal lives.

By using NHA terms such as “empowerment,” “respect,” and “authenticity” when describing their interactions with adults at New Day, participants in the youth focus group directly corroborated the leadership’s observations that the youth adopt NHA. The youths’ excitement in describing (and in one case, showing) the greatness cards, demonstrates that they feel their strengths are recognized. Youth reported progress in “emotional intelligence” and “self-advocacy” while at New Day. Some youth comments also suggest that New Day’s approach is different—and preferred—to their experience with other agencies.

4. Strengths and Suggestions

The evaluation thus found strong support for New Day’s success in implementing NHA throughout the organization, and for its ability to offer youth an opportunity to see themselves in a new, positive light.

Focus group participants identified several suggestions for improving the implementation of NHA. Both the youth and staff thought there needed to be more consistency in what behavior and activities are and are not acceptable, and that the “absolute no” should be consistent across shifts. Staff and leadership recommended more formal training, especially to support the use of NHA in crisis situations.

5. Next Steps

The evaluation team suggests a continuing evaluation that helps measure the effects of the approach on the youth over the duration of their stay at the safe home.

This may include creating measurement tools like a survey to be implemented at different points in the youths’ stay as well as their progress in conflict settings.

The data and literature are limited on the NHA, but New Day is a prime example of an organization that effectively creates change through a strength-based approach and can provide studies with qualitative and quantitative data to endorse the NHA.

References

- Brennan, A. L., Hektner, J. M., Brotherson, S. E., & Hansen, T. M. (2016, October). A Nonrandomized Evaluation of a Brief Nurtured Heart Approach Parent Training Program. In *Child & Youth Care Forum* (Vol. 45, No. 5, pp. 709-727). Springer US.
- Glasser, H., & Easley, J. (1998, 2008). *Transforming the difficult child: The nurtured heart approach*. Center of the Difficult Child.

Appendix A: Implementation of NHA in the Safe Home

Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) Implementation within the Safe Home

NHA is infused into the Safe Home through paperwork, daily shift expectations, and continuous modeling by supervisors and agency leadership. Below are some of the changes that have helped infuse NHA into the daily practice of the Safe Home:

Activity	Update Policies and Procedures
Purpose of document	Ensure all standard policies and procedures are available in written form and provides a tool to maintain consistency.
Intention of including NHA	Create consistent NHA language and messaging throughout all Safe Home documents. Provide a foundation for new employees to begin grasping the overall values and approach of the Safe Home before any training is provided.
Changes made to support NHA	Update required behavior response chart to include NHA language, problem solving and thinking, and an overview of NHA.

Activity	End of Shift (EOS)
Purpose of document	Communication tool to ensure details and key information is carried between all three shifts and as a reference for people who have been off and are starting their shift for the week.
Intention of including NHA	Shift focus of EOS from problems and challenges to what is working and honoring staff.
Changes made to support NHA	A “What’s working” section was added that is a useful way to communicate strategies and approaches that are working with specific youth and highlight things that are going well. At the end of this communication supervisors write “Observations of Greatness” for the staff that worked during that shift.

Activity	Update Case Notes
Purpose of document	Record daily activities and behaviors of each youth.
Intention of including NHA	Shift focus from documenting negative behaviors and daily tasks to focus more on what works with young people and their qualities of greatness.
Changes made to support NHA	Form was completely recreated to include: Qualities of Greatness Observed; What Worked; What helped get them back on track; Communication tools and areas for clarity.

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Activity	Greatness Bank
Purpose of document	Create opportunities for young people to have their greatness documented in a form which they can take with them, even if they are only in the Safe Home for a few days. Four greatness cards are completed each day for every youth.
Intention of including NHA	N/A New Activity
Changes made to support NHA	No changes, new activity

Activity	Greatness Shout-Outs
Purpose of document	To honor the greatness we see in our community partners.
Intention of including NHA	Ensuring we are consistent in acknowledging the greatness in our community partners and are consistent in providing evidence and richness in our description.
Changes made to support NHA	None, new formalized activity.

Activity	Youth Update Logs
Purpose of document-	Increase collaborative sharing of information and consistency and reduce duplication of efforts among Safe Home leadership.
Intention of including NHA-	Ensure we are maintaining consistency in sharing what is working and maintaining clarity across shifts.
Changes made to support NHA-	Include what is working in the information and clarifying conversations with community partners, families and the young person.

Activity	Youth Centered Meetings
Purpose of document	Opportunity to support young people when they feel stuck and things are not moving as fast as they would like or need. It is also a formal opportunity to increase clarity and celebrate greatness.
Intention of including NHA	N/A new activity
Changes made to support NHA	New activity

Activity	Team Meetings
Purpose of document	To increase collaboration between formal and natural supports, plan for additional needed services and discharge from the shelter.
Intention of including NHA	Maintain consistency in approach, ensure formal and informal supports are able to share and hear the greatness of the young person and keep the conversation focused on how what is already working will help create opportunities for the future.
Changes made to support NHA	Reformatted the team meeting format to include more NHA language.

Activity	On-going training
Purpose of document	Develop knowledge and expertise in NHA and opportunities to ask questions and practice in a safe environment.
Intention of including NHA	Increase number of training opportunities as well as adding “mini” trainings and online trainings to ensure all staff receive some training within their first 60 days and on an on-going basis.
Changes made to support NHA	To increase skill and confidence in using NHA.

Activity	Greatness Dinners
Purpose of document-	Create an opportunity for young people to reflect the greatness they see in each other and staff and a way to begin the week on a positive note (they occur every Sunday night).
Intention of including NHA-	Increase the richness and quality of a current activity.
Changes made to support NHA-	Modeling giving evidence for each person’s greatness and giving as much rich detail as possible.

Appendix B: New Day Focus Group Guides

Youth Focus Group

Introduction and verbal consent form (See Appendix E)

1. Speed dating- (3 rounds of questions. 2mins each round. Post up note cards on poster board -7 mins).
 - *Questions*
 - i. What is your favorite ice cream flavor?
 - ii. How old are you?
 - iii. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?
 - iv. How long have you been at New Day?
2. What's been your experience of New Day? (Large Group question 10mins)
 - *Probes*
 - i. Can you tell us about staying at New Day?
 - ii. What is good about it? What do you enjoy? What do you like about New Day?
 - iii. What's a funny or favorite story you have about your stay here?
3. What have you learned about yourself while staying at New Day? (Large Group question writes strengths on poster paper) (10 mins)
 - *Probes*
 - i. Have you identified any strengths in yourself?
 - ii. How do you see yourself using those strengths after you leave New Day?
4. What is one good thing and one thing that could improve in the New Day safe home? (two groups) (10 mins) (small group)
5. Have you stayed at other shelters? For those of you have, what is it like compared to other shelters? (two groups question) (10 mins) (small group)
 - *Probes*
 - i. Why (how) is this shelter different?
 - ii. When did you decide it was different?
6. New Day is working hard to build create an environment that focuses on strengths. What is something New Day could do to take that to the next level? (Large Group question 10mins)

Staff Focus Group

1. How do you define the Nurtured Heart Approach? (written on cards then put on board, visual)
2. What has been your experience using the Nurtured Heart Approach?
 - *Probes*
 - i. Is it easy or difficult to use with the youth?
 - ii. What could help in using it more effectively?
 - iii. How do the youth respond to it?
 - iv. Do you think it makes a difference in the climate of the shelter?
3. What would be beneficial or helpful in remembering and sustaining the NHA approach?
4. What would it take for you to feel confident using NHA?
 - *Probes*
 - i. What training/how much would be useful to help consistency with the NHA?
 - ii. Are there any challenges you encounter in trying to use the NHA approach? If so, what, explain.
5. Do you feel like your supervisors have the same understanding or definition of the NHA as you? How are they similar? How do they vary?
6. Do your supervisors use the NHA in their interactions with you? With each other?
7. Are there any positive moments that stand out to you that you think came from the using the NHA? – (*Written story activity*)

Leadership Focus Group

1. How do you define the Nurtured Heart Approach? (written on cards then put on board).
2. What has been your experience using the Nurtured Heart Approach?
3. What would it take for you to feel confident using NHA?
4. What are the challenges with the NHA?
5. Do you see the NHA being used in all levels? Leadership team to staff, staff to youth, youth with each other?
6. How do we create a culture to sustain NHA within the shelter? Within the executive leadership team? When there is staff turnover?
7. Are there particular positive moments that stand out to you that you think came from the NHA? (written *story activity- on the same sheet*: On a scale of 0 to full implementation of NHA where do you think the New Day is at? What is your personal perception?)

Appendix C: Focus Group Written Activities

New Day Staff Focus Group

February 22nd, 2017

Are there any positive moments that stand out to you that you think came from the using the Nurtured Heart Approach?

Please use the space below to write about a particular moment that comes to mind.

“There are always a few youth that you make a great connection with through the Nurtured Heart Approach. One that sticks out is a young lady we had at our shelter about three months ago. When she arrived her CYFD worker let us know that she would run as soon as she got the chance. Her life story was one of the worse we have seen. Through honesty and the NHA she stayed a full three months and was adopted. I truly believe without New Day and the Nurtured Heart Approach she would not have made it.”

“I don’t know if one moment really stands out because they are all so important. But some of the times the NHA has helped me grow is when I see a youth that reminds me so much of myself and I am able to nurture them and help them find compassion for themselves. Sometimes it’s a lot of what I wished I would have heard and learned. BY helping and being there for them I am able to heal myself and become a better person and grow so much. It has changed my life.”

“One time a youth asked to do laundry at 7am and I said it showed how responsible he was because he was willing to wake up early to make sure he had clean clothes. He had a big grin on his face. Then after, he said he was only doing it because he didn’t have any clean shirts. But by doing NHA I made a ‘small thing’ feel like a big thing.”

“I used NHA on a tough relationship I was having with a youth. I was recognizing some social anxiety when I was around and they would snap at me at random moments. I spent some extra time on writing a greatness card explaining all of their greatness I had seen over time and how it made me feel. After sharing that with them they had no struggle engaging and opening up. I think it took me employing NHA to build a relationship and understating with this youth that may not have happened otherwise.”

“They honor and recognize their supervisors! That’s never happened to me before as a supervisor!”

“A youth here at New Day was about to discharge and he know of his D/C plan and time. This particular youth started cursing at staff and youth and being negative which was out of character. So, I decided to take a moment and talk to him one on one using NHA. I told him genuinely, that I work with a lot of youth and he was one I would remember by his positive character and how he treated others. He was resistant but when I continued using NHA by stating his characteristics and how respectful he constantly treated others and how people noticed that, he began to smile and looked back at me and thanked me.”

“Recently, I saw a youth coming from a very negative place. The youth took me aside and really thanked me for being there for him. He made comments about how New Day has become his family and on his team. He felt from the 6 weeks he was at New Day, he found himself and was thankful for the team he had. The youth successfully discharged to a transitional living program.”

“Nothing too specific, but the NHA approach of not feeding into negativity has really decreased our time doing “damage control” and given us better tools to drive negative energy out of the house. We recently had a youth who was constantly crying “woe is me” and having a method that allowed him to realize that he wouldn’t get the attention he wanted from that was extremely helpful for him to eventually turn his attitude around.”

“One evening I forgot about NHA and fed negativity by raising my voice at a youth. I quickly realized my mistake and sat down with the youth to use NHA and point out his strengths. I apologized and told him that he is strong, opinionated, and stands his ground and how that will help him achieve his goals. He started to cry and vented to me about how he’s always seen those qualities as negative because it gets him into arguments. Our bond became stronger and he began pointing out strengths in other youth.”

“I was packing up a young person’s room (they were moving to a more permanent placement) and they had fitted bedsheets over their window to keep it extra dark in their room. In the pocket that the sheet made at the corner were all of their greatness cards. Right next to where they would place their head to go to sleep. I imagine it was the first things they read in the morning and the last thing they read before going to sleep.”

How long have you been employed at New Day? Answers ranged from 4 months to 1 year and 8 months.

New Day Executive Leadership Team Focus Group

February 23rd, 2017

Are there any particular positive moments that stand out to you that you think came from the using the Nurtured Heart Approach?

Please use the space below to write about a particular moment that comes to mind.

“We really have developed a company culture around NHA. I’ve seen this in staff development. The evidence shines in the staff retention and positive feedback from those staff. I am thinking of a few recent instances where a few staff and a couple of personal situations arise (illness, vandalism, etc.) that prevented them from being a.) at work or b.) at work and not focused. What I saw from top admin down was the focus on staff self-care and positive feedback for support. What could easily have become a crisis in these situations, really wasn’t energized and everything was very easily worked out.”

“I’ll be intentionally vague with specifics here; working with my direct supervisor who models NHA for me on a regular basis regarding staff interaction and specifically regarding supervision strategies.”

“We had a team meeting that developed into a shouting match between a young person and the probation officer that was going in the “you’re going back to jail” direction. And through recognizing how deeply both parties cared for the young person’s future and some clarity around what was actually happening we avoided jail and had a successful discharge a month later.”

“A community partner was telling us that a young person who had been with us about a year ago still had all of their greatness cars and proudly showed them to community partners as evidence and proof of their awesomeness- or greatness if you will. We never know the lasting impact so I appreciated a little about the year plus impact.”

“A youth having a successful discharge. This allowed her to find the confidence within herself to know that she can finish/do something when no one believed she could.”

On a scale of 0 to full implementation of NHA where do you think the New Day is at? What is your personal perception? *The average was 7. How long have you been employed at New Day? Answers ranged from 2 months-3 years*

Appendix D: Staff and Leadership NHA Definitions

Written Nurtured Heart Definitions from Staff Focus Group

“How do you define the Nurtured Heart Approach?”

“Building up people’s self-worth and confidence while focusing on the positive and not energizing the negative, in order to see more positive actions.”

“The NHA encompasses positive behavior strategies whose main goal is to develop an individual’s inner power. Positivity, encouragements, and the sense of self is total important.”

“NHA is a unique style of working with people designed to “build their inner wealth” that helps create a sense of community and support between (at New Day specifically) youth and staff, as well as strengthen staff relationships.”

“The NHA is a strength based approach that works to build inner wealth in individuals. The approach is used to establish clear expectations utilizing three stands. Absolute yes, Absolute No, and Absolute Clarity. It focuses on the importance of building relationships.”

“Taking negative behaviors and changing them to positive by only energizing the positive you see. Also, not leaving any room if something is not clear. Doing your best to try and always find a way to say yes instead of no.”

“NHA is a tool used to help build inner wealth in self and others. NHA focuses on the positivity rather than using energy on the negatives.”

“I define the NHA as a paradigm shift with what we focus our energy on. It is a focus on the positive while not energizing the negative and being clear with boundaries and expectations, in order to have happy and flourishing youth at our agency.”

“NHA is a practice in building up the inner wealth in young people through focusing on what is working and seeing their greatness in every moment and interaction.”

“The NHA is about building the inner wealth of people so that they can make positive choices because they know they are valuable.”

“I define NHA as an alternative to strategies that have not been working. Nurtured heart gets both the staff and client focused on the positive and only temporally focuses on the negative as consequences.”

Written Nurtured Heart Definitions from Leadership Team Focus Group
“How do you define the Nurtured Heart Approach?”

“The NHA is a language system for implementing trauma-informed care and a strength based approach. Its focus is absolute clarity and recognizing the positivity we see in the clients and staff.”

“Utilizing strengths and positivity in others to encourage positive outcomes. Not focusing on the negative.”

“A method and ideology that actually uses strengths and defines and implements the strength based approach to achieving successes and goals.”

A way of facilitating people being seen, heard, validated, and understood that exists outside of traditional deficit-based western systems for behavioral health and social service providers.”

“Process of building inner wealth in people. Recognizing and celebrating individual’s greatness!”

- “1.) Creating real-time opportunities for positive action/interpretation and growth.*
- 2.) “Absolute No” energizing negativity, focusing on not energizing the negative.*
- 3.) “Yes” Positive inner wealth. 4.) Establishing clear boundaries.”*

Appendix E: Informed Consent for Focus Groups

NM EVALUATION LAB @ UNM
Informed Consent for Focus Groups
Spring 2017

To be read out loud to participants:

Hi, My name is [STUDENT] and I am a [GRADUATE / UNDERGRADUATE] student in the [PROGRAM OF STUDY] at UNM.

I'm working with [ORGANIZATION] as part of the NM Evaluation Lab @ UNM.

The Evaluation Lab helps organizations improve their programs.

[ORGANIZATION] is interested in understanding how clients [volunteers] experience its programs, and that's why we are interviewing you.

I am going to ask you a few questions, such as how you found out about [ORGANIZATION] and what has been most useful to you from participating in [ORGANIZATION].

The focus group will take about an hour.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can decide to leave at any time. You don't have to answer every question. It's fine to say, "Pass," or just let me know that you don't have anything to say about that question.

We will take notes and record the discussion to make sure we understand what you said, but we are not going to keep any names. We won't share the recording with [ORGANIZATION]. Once we have reviewed the recording to make sure our notes are accurate, we will destroy the recording. If anyone would rather we not record, we won't!

There are no known risks in this study, but some people may experience discomfort when asked questions.

We will write up a report of today's discussion to help [ORGANIZATION] understand different points of view expressed. [ORGANIZATION] may post the report online or distribute paper versions. These reports may include direct quotes from you, but your name will not be known to the researcher and will not be included in any reports.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Melissa Binder at (505) 277-3548. I have her business card here if you want one.

Does anyone have any questions?