

AVENUES FOR JUSTICE

Andrew Glover Youth Program

Annual Report
2023

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Introduction	1
Characteristics of the Participants	2
Participation	4
<i>Workshop Attendance</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Length of Participation and Retention.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Participant Encounters</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Referrals Made by AFJ.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Program Outcomes.....	8
<i>Graduation Outcomes</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Court Outcomes.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Employment</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Certifications</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Education.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Recidivism.....	12
<i>Study sample</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Recidivism outcomes</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Comparison data.....</i>	<i>15</i>
Participant Satisfaction	17
<i>Describing the Survey Sample</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Rating the Program Content.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Rating AFJ Staff and Other Aspects of the Program</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Assessing Program Impact</i>	<i>19</i>
Summary	21

Executive Summary

Avenues for Justice (AFJ) is a non-profit which diverts young people, ages 13-24, across New York City, from the criminal justice system to community-based supportive services to help them build successful lives.

This 2023 Annual Report is a statistical presentation of Avenues for Justice's program over the past year, as well as longer-term outcomes of recidivism and Participant satisfaction for those Participants no longer in the program. The Report reflects four key recent mutually reinforcing developments at AFJ: 1) AFJ's expansion of its service area from two neighborhoods (Lower East Side and Harlem) in Manhattan to all five boroughs, 2) AFJ's increasing involvement in the New York City Family Court Diversion Program and a City-sponsored Re-entry Program for Incarcerated Youth, 3) AFJ's expansion of its program offerings mainly through the build-out of the HIRE-Up program and 4) AFJ's successful implementation of a hybrid onsite/digital platform. As a result of these changes, AFJ is serving more Participants than ever with a more fulsome program. These Participants are younger, more geographically dispersed and complete the program in a shorter period of time.

AFJ operates programs for two main groups of Participants: 1) "Court-Involved" Participants who are in the criminal justice system; and 2) "At-Risk" Participants who are at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. Court-Involved includes three sub-groups: a) AFJ's signature long-term Court Advocacy program ("Court Advocacy"), b) a short-term diversion program for younger Participants whose cases are in the NYC Family Court ("Family Court Diversion"), and c) a program for re-entry Participants who have been recently released from a detention center ("Re-entry").

Services for the Court-Involved and At-Risk programs are provided online and onsite at AFJ's two community centers in Harlem and the Lower East Side, and at AFJ's headquarters inside the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse. All Participants receive HIRE Up services for job training with certification, communications/civics, mental and physical health wellness care, life skills and educational support. In addition, Court-Involved Participants receive court advocacy services with intensive case management. AFJ also provides referrals to third party specialists for all Participants as needed.

During 2023, AFJ served 296 Participants in the Court-Involved program. This is the largest number of Court-Involved Participants served by AFJ in a single year. Ninety-six were in the long-term Court Advocacy program, 125 were in the Family Court Diversion program, 65 were Re-entry, and 10 were receiving supportive services. One hundred forty were served through the Lower East Side site and 156 were served through the Harlem site. This report focuses on the 296 Court-Involved Participants.

During 2023, 132 young people entered the Court-Involved program. This is by far the largest group of new Participants in AFJ's intake history.

During 2023, AFJ also served 221 At-Risk Participants online and at its Lower East Side (110) and Harlem (111) locations.

Characteristics of the Participants

- 95% of the Participants were Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino.

- 88% were male, and the majority (74%) were 18 years of age or younger at intake.
- The program enrolled 132 new Court-Involved Participants in 2023.

Participation

- In 2023, AFJ offered over 200 workshops, classes, and training sessions focused on digital literacy, teen empowerment, legal rights and responsibilities, mental health, job readiness, careers, and financial literacy.
- There were 10,531 recorded encounters between AFJ staff and Court-Involved Participants in 2023. The monthly median number of encounters per Participant was 3.6. The monthly median number of encounters for new Participants was 7.1. By design, AFJ has more intense involvement with Court-Involved Participants in their first year in the program.
- 145 referrals were provided to Court-Involved Participants.

Program Outcomes/Recidivism

- Of the cases that had court outcomes during 2023, 71% were adjourned and 16% were dismissed.
- In 2023, 142 Court-Involved Participants exited the program; 138 completed the program, with 108 achieving all goals.
- 7% of AFJ Participants in the recidivism study (n=320) were reconvicted in New York State within three years after enrolling in the program, compared to 42% of New York City parolees from a 2011 study. The three-year reconviction rate among successful graduates of AFJ was 6%.
- Within six years of enrollment, 13% of Participants who were enrolled between 2013 and 2016 (n=180) were reconvicted. Among successful program completers, 12% were reconvicted within six years of enrollment; 8% were reconvicted of a misdemeanor and 4% were convicted of a felony.

Participant Satisfaction

- In 2023, AFJ continued to collect Participant satisfaction surveys to assess the impact of the Court-Involved program beyond recidivism and to obtain Participant feedback. Respondents rated the program highly. Respondents reported that AFJ had improved their decision-making, given them hope, and helped them resist peer pressure. All but three of the 62 respondents said they would recommend the program to peers involved with the criminal justice system.

Introduction

Avenues for Justice (AFJ) is a non-profit community-based program which diverts young people ages 13-24, across New York City, from the criminal justice system to supportive services to help them build successful lives. AFJ operates programs for two main groups of Participants: 1) "Court-Involved" Participants who are in the criminal justice system; and 2) "At-Risk" Participants who are at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. Court-Involved includes three sub-groups of Participants: a) AFJ's signature long-term Court Advocacy program ("Court Advocacy"), b) a short-term diversion program for younger Participants whose cases are in the NYC Family Court ("Family Court Diversion"), and c) a program for re-entry Participants who have been recently released from a detention center ("Re-entry").

Services for the Court-Involved and At-Risk programs are provided online and onsite at AFJ's two community centers in Harlem and the Lower East Side, and at AFJ's headquarters inside the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse. All Participants receive HIRE Up services for job training with certification, communications/civics, mental and physical health wellness care, life skills and educational support. In addition, Court-Involved Participants receive court advocacy services with intensive case management. AFJ also provides referrals to third party specialists for all Participants as needed.

During 2023, AFJ served 296 Participants in the Court-Involved program: 96 were in the long-term Court Advocacy program, 125 were in the Family Court Diversion program, 65 were Re-entry, and 10 were receiving supportive services. One hundred forty were served through the Lower East Side site and 156 were served through the Harlem site. This report focuses on the 296 Court-Involved Participants.

During 2023, AFJ also served 221 At-Risk Participants online and at its Lower East Side (110) and Harlem (111) locations.

The first section of this report, **Characteristics of the Participants**, presents a demographic profile of the 296 Participants served in the Court-Involved program in 2023. It also provides information about new enrollments.

The second section, **Participation**, presents attendance data and shows length of participation at AFJ, overall program retention, and encounter information. A summary of referrals made by AFJ is also presented.

The **Program Outcomes** section presents court outcome data, the number of Participants successfully engaged in work and/or school, and graduation outcomes. A summary of the annual recidivism study is included, as well as Participant satisfaction data from responding AFJ graduates and alumni.

Characteristics of the Participants

As seen in Table 1, a large majority of the 296 Court-Involved Participants served during 2023 were male (88%), identified as Black/African American (61%) or Hispanic/Latino (34%), and were 18 years of age or younger at intake (74%). As pointed out below, we are now receiving an increasing number of new Participants from the Family Court. As a result, our Court-Involved Participants continue to trend younger than in past years. About half of these families received Medicaid (47%) and 43% received food stamps. Six in ten of the Participants were referred from the court. One hundred thirty-two of these Participants were newly enrolled during 2023.

Table 1: Demographics at intake	All youth (n=296)	Newly enrolled participants (n=132)
Gender:		
Male	88%	93%
Female	12%	7%
Race/ethnicity:		
Black/African American	61%	66%
Hispanic/Latino	34%	30%
Other/Unknown	5%	4%
Age:		
15 years and younger	22%	28%
16-18 years	52%	51%
19-21 years	19%	16%
22-24 years	6%	5%
25 years and older	1%	0%
Participant or family receives:¹		
Food stamps	43%	43%
Public assistance/welfare	28%	29%
Medicaid	47%	40%
Private health insurance	14%	17%
Intake source:		
Court	61%	70%
Family	10%	9%
Self-referred	3%	3%
Re-entry	1%	2%
Other	24%	16%
Not reported	1%	0%

Toward the end of 2020, AFJ began working with young people in the New York City Law Department's Family Court Division's "Diversion" program. Young people assigned to the Family Court Diversion program are mandated to community-based Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) organizations, such as AFJ, for a specific number of sessions or workshops---typically 4 to 16. Diversion youth must also complete their mandate within a 60-day period. The program targets youth under the age of 18. The Family Court judges determine whether a youth is eligible for Diversion in their discretion, based on several factors including age, severity of the criminal offense, criminal history, and personal situation. Diversion Participants receive the same services as other AFJ Court-Involved Participants, but generally have a much shorter stay in the

¹ Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

program. After completion of the 60-day mandate, AFJ encourages Diversion Participants to remain in the program.

Of the 296 Participants served during 2023, 42% were in the Family Court Diversion program, 33% were in the long-term Court Advocacy program, 22% were Re-entry, and 3% were receiving supportive services. Nearly half of the newly enrolled Participants in 2023 were in the Family Court Diversion program and about a third were Re-entry. In 2023, the Diversion subgroup continued to grow within the AFJ Court-Involved program in both proportional and absolute terms.

Table 2: Program status at intake	All youth (n=296)	Newly enrolled participants (n=132)
Program:		
ATI	33%	17%
Diversion	42%	47%
Re-entry	22%	34%
Supportive	3%	2%

Over the last several years, AFJ's Participant population has become much more geographically dispersed. In 2019, more than three-quarters (77%) of all Court-Involved Participants lived in Manhattan and about a quarter (23%) lived in the outer boroughs. By 2023, a little more than a third (35%) of all Court-Involved Participants lived in Manhattan and 65% lived in the outer boroughs, including 34% in the Bronx. Among new Participants in 2023, only 30% lived in Manhattan and 70% lived in the outer boroughs. AFJ's development of a hybrid platform of digital programs in response to COVID-19 as well as AFJ's new presence in the outer-borough courts were major factors for AFJ's expansion into the outer boroughs. In 2023, Court-Involved Participants lived in 42 of New York City's 51 Council Districts. The increased outreach has raised AFJ's profile throughout New York City and has been a contributing factor in AFJ's increased involvement in City-sponsored initiatives.

Table 3: Neighborhood at Intake	All youth (n=296)	Newly enrolled participants (n=132)
Neighborhood:		
Lower Manhattan	14%	11%
Upper Manhattan	21%	19%
Outside of Manhattan		
Bronx	34%	41%
Brooklyn	15%	14%
Queens	7%	10%
Staten Island	2%	1%
Other	7%	4%

Seven in ten of the Participants were enrolled in school at intake, with over half (56%) enrolled in high school and 3% enrolled in a GED or HSE program. Fifty-eight percent of the newly enrolled Participants were enrolled in high school and 4% in a GED or HSE program.

Table 4: School enrollment at intake	All youth (n=296)	Newly enrolled participants (n=132)
None	29%	23%
Pre high school	8%	14%
High school	56%	58%
GED or HSE program	3%	4%
College or trade school	3%	1%
Unknown	1%	0%

Participation

Workshop Attendance

In 2023, AFJ's HIRE Up program included a wide roster of workshops including job training with certification, educational, civics training, and mental and physical health wellness and life skills, both online and onsite at the Harlem and Lower East Side community centers. The table below lists the 15 most popular workshops offered, the number of sessions and the total attendance at each. The workshops with the greatest attendance included Teen Empowerment, Legal Rights & Responsibilities, and Job Readiness for employment-aged Participants.

Table 5: Topical workshops offered	Number of Sessions	Total Attendance	Number of Individuals
Teen Empowerment	28	474	146
Legal Rights & Responsibilities	19	267	120
Job Readiness - for employment-aged Participants	8	123	86
Physical Fitness	17	65	35
Careers – OSHA-30, Scaffolding/Flaggers/CPR	11	63	--
Holiday Events	6	58	50
Job Readiness – for young people under 16 years old	11	52	20
Mental Health - group sessions	12	49	11
Workforce 1	2	29	28
Guest Speakers	2	25	23
Field Trips	2	23	20
Mental Health 101	4	21	21
Financial Literacy	1	20	20
Wide Rainbow – Art museum field trips	3	13	9
Cooking	3	13	11
<i>Total workshop attendance in 2023</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>1,295</i>	<i>257</i>

Active At-Risk Participants also participated in the HIRE Up program. The workshops with the greatest attendance included Teen Empowerment, Legal Rights & Responsibilities, and Careers – OSHA-30, Scaffolding/Flaggers/CPR.

Table 6: At-Risk Participants Only Topical workshops offered	Number of Sessions	Total Attendance	Number of Individuals
Teen Empowerment	25	71	33
Legal Rights & Responsibilities	16	47	27
Careers – OSHA-30, Scaffolding/Flaggers/CPR	6	27	16
Job Readiness - for employment-aged Participants	7	21	14
Physical Fitness	7	12	8
Mental Health - group sessions	5	6	3
Job readiness – for young people under 16 years old	4	6	4
Holiday Events	1	6	6
Workforce 1	1	5	5
Cooking	3	4	3
Field Trips	2	3	3
Mental Health 101	2	2	2
<i>Total workshop attendance in 2023</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>68</i>

Length of Participation and Retention

Table 7 illustrates the length of participation of AFJ Court-Involved Participants seen in 2023 measured as of their date of departure or December 31, 2023 (for those Participants still in the program as of that date). Sixty-four percent of all Participants had been in the program for less than one year and 24% had been in the program for one or two years. Twelve percent had been attending for three or more years. On average, Participants had been with the program for less than one year.

Table 7: Length of participation	Diversion youth (n=125)	Non-Diversion youth (n=171)	All youth (n=296)
Less than 1 year	80%	52%	64%
1 or 2 years	20%	26%	24%
3 or 4 years	0%	9%	5%
5 or more years	0%	13%	7%
Median # of years	0.5	1.0	0.7

As noted above, diversion Participants are only mandated to AFJ for 4 to 16 sessions (encounters) which are to occur during a 60-day period. Participants may choose to remain in the program after the mandate. Of the 72 Diversion Participants who left the program in 2023, the average length of stay was 6.5 months. Even accounting for those Participants who chose to remain in the program, the inclusion of Family Court Diversion Participants has reduced the average length of program stay within the 2023 cohort and compared to previous years.

Participant Encounters

As seen in Table 8, the 296 Court-Involved Participants had an average of 35.6 encounters with staff; the median² number of encounters was 17. Participant encounters included telephone and electronic communication and interpersonal interactions which may involve counseling, tutoring, or workshop attendance. The 132 new Participants had an average of 32.8 encounters with staff; the median number of encounters was 22.5. Monthly median encounters for all Court-Involved Participants and for new Court-Involved Participants were 3.6 and 7.1, respectively. Monthly median calculations only account for the period in which a Participant is active in the program, so it is the most accurate measure of the frequency of encounters. By design, AFJ staff interact with new Participants more often than with other Participants because that is when most Participants are at greatest risk.

Table 8: Encounters (2023)	Diversion youth (n=125)	Non-Diversion youth (n=171)	New participants (n=132)	All youth (n=296)
Total	3,012	7,519	4,327	10,531
Mean	24.1	44.0	32.8	35.6
Median	11.0	20	22.5	17
Range	1 to 432	1 to 339	1 to 156	1 to 432
Monthly mean	4.7	6.4	7.9	5.7
Monthly median	2.3	4.7	7.1	3.6

Note: The monthly mean and monthly median are calculated by dividing the number of encounters during the reporting period by the number of months a Participant was active during that reporting period.

Figure 1 (next page) shows the total number of encounters over the past five years. The number of Participants is included below each year in parenthesis. Starting in 2019, AFJ court advocates recorded all Participant contacts separately (in previous years, multiple contacts on a given day were recorded as one encounter).

It should be noted that in 2020 and 2021 the total number of encounters decreased due to two factors. First, the community center closures required by COVID-19 reduced staff/Participant interpersonal interactions. Second, 42% of AFJ's new Participants in the program in 2021 came from the Diversion program run by the Family Court which, by design, is more short-term in nature and calls for fewer encounters. Additionally, 15 Participants in 2021 were shorter-term Re-entry Participants. It is also possible that encounter data collection was challenged in 2021 by the full year of remote working. The number of total encounters increased in 2022 with both community centers fully reopening but dropped again in 2023. This drop is likely not an actual decrease in activity but due to under-reporting as court advocates adjusted to using a new system to record encounters in real-time during the 2023 calendar year.

Notably, however, Figure 2 (next page) shows monthly median encounters for new Participants -- to whom AFJ devotes more resources because they are at greater risk -- have been fairly consistent over the past five years (the only years in which they were measured).

² The mean number of encounters is much higher than the median number of encounters because total encounters for individual Participants ranged from one to as many as 432 during 2023. The median is the more accurate way to consider a typical case.

Figure 1
Number of Client Encounters
2019 - 2023

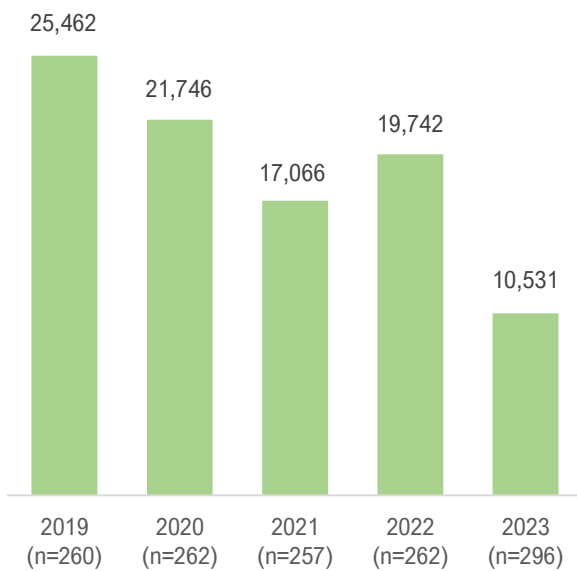
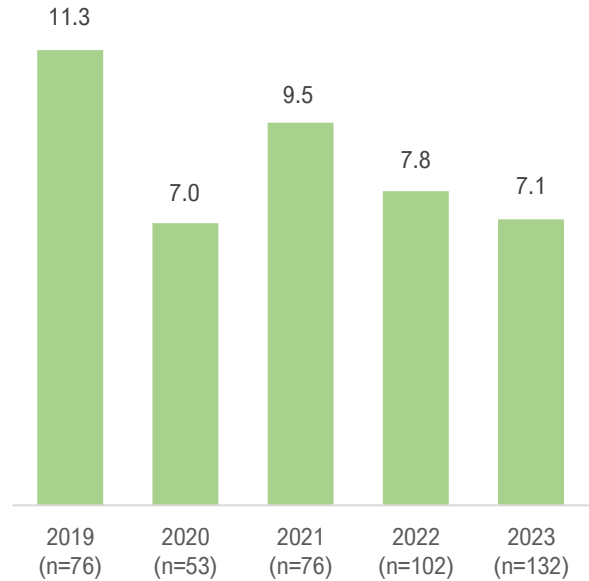


Figure 2
Median Monthly Encounters for New Participants
2019- 2023



Referrals Made by AFJ

Table 9 shows the number of employment, education, substance abuse, mental health, and housing referrals during 2023. During the year, there were 145 total referrals for 58 Participants. Employment and education referrals occurred most often. Referrals are used to help prevent further involvement in the juvenile justice system and have become a substantial part of AFJ's work.

Table 9: Referral type	# of participants	# of referrals	Median # of referrals per participant
Employment	47	102	2
Education	14	24	1
Substance abuse – inpatient	0	0	0
Substance abuse – outpatient	1	1	1
Mental health – inpatient	1	1	1
Mental health – outpatient	11	15	1
Housing	2	2	1
Overall Total	58	145	2

Program Outcomes

Graduation Outcomes

Graduation outcomes for Participants who exited the program over the last eight years are shown in Table 10. As seen here, the vast majority of exiting Participants completed the program successfully. Just 5% of Court-Involved Participants who exited the program failed to complete the program.

Table 10: Graduation outcomes for participants who exited the program	Successful completion	Completed, not all goals met	Terminated/ incarcerated	Total # of participants who exited the program
2016	71%	21%	8%	38
2017	67%	31%	2%	55
2018	67%	25%	8%	24
2019	63%	31%	6%	51
2020	81%	15%	4%	81
2021	86%	9%	5%	96
2022	77%	13%	10%	101
2023	76%	21%	3%	142
<i>Total</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>588</i>

Table 11 shows the completion status of the new Participants served over the past eleven years as of December 2023. Of the 682 enrollees, 22% were still active in the AFJ program, 60% successfully completed the program and met all goals, and 14% completed the program but did not meet all goals. Only 4% failed to complete the program.

Additionally, of the 102 Court-Involved Participants who enrolled in 2022, 80% completed the program by the end of 2023. This short duration reflects the increasing size of the Diversion subgroup within AFJ's Court-Involved cohort.

Table 11: Exit data per newly enrolled cohort over the past ten years	Newly enrolled	Still active	Successful completion	Completed, not all goals met	Terminated/ incarcerated
2013	46	0%	85%	13%	2%
2014	53	4%	70%	19%	7%
2015	42	2%	69%	19%	10%
2016	39	13%	62%	20%	5%
2017	32	9%	75%	13%	3%
2018	32	16%	59%	22%	3%
2019	76	8%	71%	13%	8%
2020	53	8%	74%	9%	9%
2021	75	9%	78%	12%	1%
2022	102	17%	60%	20%	3%
2023	132	78%	15%	5%	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>4%</i>

Court Outcomes

In 2023, there were 329 court outcomes reported for 126 Participants. Some cases may have more than one outcome (for example, a case might have been adjourned and later dismissed; or a conditional discharge might have resulted in a prison sentence later in the year). Most of the court outcomes were adjournments or dismissed cases. An AFJ Participant's court case can have multiple adjournments as the Judge evaluates a Participant's progress with the program. Importantly, only one outcome resulted in a prison sentence for an AFJ Participant.

Table 12: Court outcomes	# (%)
Case adjourned	231 (70%)
Case dismissed	56 (17%)
ACD conditional	9 (3%)
Plead	5 (2%)
Remanded	5 (2%)
Adjudicated youth offender	4 (1%)
Assigned to AFJ	4 (1%)
Reduced sentence	4 (1%)
Probation	3 (1%)
Split sentence	2 (1%)
Bail set	1 (<1%)
Prison	1 (<1%)
Other court outcome	4 (1%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>329 (100%)</i>

Employment

Ninety-three Participants (31% of the 296 active Participants) were employed during 2023 and 60 of these obtained employment during the 2023 calendar year. Of the 93 that were employed, 61% participated in the HIRE Up program. Of the 60 that obtained employment during 2023, 75% participated in the HIRE Up program.

Table 13: Employment	(n)	# (%)
Number of active participants employed	296	93 (31%)
Number who obtained employment in 2023	296	60 (20%)
Number of employed who participated in HIRE Up	93	57 (61%)
Number who obtained employment in 2023 who participated in HIRE Up	60	45 (75%)

Certifications

AFJ Participants earned 514 digital literacy certifications in 2023 (Table 14). The most commonly earned certifications pertained to basic computer skills, email, internet basics, and MS Windows 10.

Table 14: Digital literacy certifications	# earned in 2023
Basic computer skills	57 (11%)
Email	50 (10%)
Internet basics	50 (10%)
MS Windows 10	46 (9%)
Social media	37 (7%)
Mac OS	37 (7%)
Accessing telehealth appointments	35 (7%)
Google docs	34 (7%)
K-12 distance learning	32 (6%)
MS Word Office 2016	31 (6%)
Your digital footprint	26 (5%)
MS Excel Office 2016	24 (5%)
MS PowerPoint Office 2016	22 (4%)
Career search skills	18 (3%)
Information literacy	15 (3%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>514 (100%)</i>

Participants earned 83 OSHA certifications, with 19 certifications earned for OSHA 40 and forty earned for OSHA Flaggers and Scaffolding safety. Additionally, 20 CPR certifications were earned and 4 Food Handlers certifications.

Table 15: Certifications	# earned in 2023
OSHA 40	19 (23%)
OSHA flaggers and scaffolding safety	40 (48%)
CPR Certification	20 (24%)
Food Handlers	4 (5%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>83 (100%)</i>

Education

Education information is collected from Participants at intake, on an annual basis while a Participant is active (annual follow-up), and at program completion/exit. One hundred ninety-three Participants had at least one follow-up assessment and/or an exit assessment as of December 31, 2023.

As seen here, 105 Participants were currently in school at last follow-up/exit. Of the 61 that were not in school or in an educational program at intake and had a follow-up/exit assessment, eight had re-entered school. In total, 35 Participants improved their educational situation from intake to last follow-up/exit.

Table 16a: Educational status	(n)	# (%)
In school/educational program at intake	296	208 (70%)
In school/educational program at last follow-up/exit	193	105 (54%)
Re-entered school/educational program at some point during participation at AFJ (of those not in an educational program at intake)	61	8 (13%)
Had high school diploma or GED at intake	296	52 (18%)
Attained a high school diploma or GED from intake to last follow-up/exit (of those without a high school diploma or GED at intake)	127	26 (20%)
Had college/trade school diploma at intake	296	2 (<1%)
Attained a college/trade school diploma from intake to last follow-up/exit	162	1 (<1%)
Had <u>any</u> improved educational situation from intake to last follow-up/exit	193	35 (18%)

Note: 193 of the 296 active Participants had at least one follow-up and/or exit by December 2023.

Of the 208 active Participants that were in school or an educational program at intake, 130 had at least one follow-up or exit assessment. Of those 130 Participants, 75% were still in school and 16% had attained a high school diploma or GED. Just 9% were no longer in school or an educational program at last follow-up or exit assessment.

Table 16b: Educational Status of Those Who were in School/Educational Program at Intake (n=130)	# (%)
In school/educational program at last follow-up/exit	97 (75%)
Attained a high school diploma or GED by last follow-up/exit	21 (16%)
No longer in school/educational program at last follow-up/exit	12 (9%)

Recidivism

A primary focus of AFJ is to aid Court-Involved Participants in desisting from future involvement in crime. Historically, to measure desistance, AFJ has tracked Participant recidivism.³ In 2017, AFJ launched a new recidivism study. As seen in Table 17 below, 320 Participants across seven cohorts have been included in this new study to date.

Recidivism data were collected each year (2017 through 2023). Three-year recidivism rates were calculated using the date of enrollment in AFJ as the starting point. Recidivism was measured separately based on 1) rearrests, 2) convictions, and 3) incarcerations.⁴ Six-year recidivism rates are also provided for the 2013 through 2016 cohorts. To put the AFJ recidivism rates into context, comparison data are presented as well.

Study sample

Demographic characteristics were gathered from program enrollment data completed by AFJ Court Advocates. As seen in Table 17, the majority of Participants identified as Male. On average, they were about 18 years old. The majority were Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American.

Table 17: Demographics at intake	2013 Cohort (n=46)	2014 Cohort (n=53)	2015 Cohort (n=42)	2016 Cohort (n=39)	2017 Cohort (n=32)	2018 Cohort (n=32)	2019 Cohort (n=76)	Total (n=320)
Gender	(n=46)	(n=52)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=319)
Male	70%	81%	88%	67%	78%	66%	70%	74%
Female	30%	19%	12%	33%	22%	34%	30%	26%
Race/ethnicity	(n=46)	(n=51)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=318)
Hispanic/Latino	33%	47%	52%	41%	41%	60%	39%	44%
Black/African American	48%	39%	45%	41%	41%	31%	50%	43%
White/Caucasian	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Other/Multiethnic	17%	14%	3%	15%	18%	9%	11%	12%
Age	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=320)
15 years & younger	13%	21%	12%	13%	9%	3%	26%	16%
16-18 years	48%	66%	55%	67%	57%	53%	35%	52%
19-21 years	35%	11%	29%	15%	28%	28%	26%	24%
22-24 years	4%	2%	2%	5%	3%	16%	13%	7%
25 years and older	0%	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%

³ A prior recidivism study which ran from 1994-2015 was discontinued in anticipation of this study, which includes more detailed data collection.

⁴ To obtain follow up data, AFJ staff searched the NYS Unified Court System's eCourts case tracking service and provided arrest, conviction, and incarceration data to Philliber Research & Evaluation. Documentation of the data presented in this report is stored at AFJ.

Recidivism outcomes

The definition of recidivism varies across studies. In this study, we calculated three different recidivism rates starting from enrollment in AFJ to 1) first arrest after program enrollment, 2) first conviction after program enrollment, and 3) first incarceration after program enrollment. In general, recidivism declines as the measures progress from arrest, to conviction, to incarceration as not all arrests result in convictions and not all convictions result in a carceral sentence. While opinions vary, convictions are generally considered to be the preferred metric for measuring recidivism.

Within three years of enrollment, 14% (n=44) of AFJ Participants were rearrested within New York State, 6% were charged with misdemeanors and 8% were charged with felonies (Table 18). Among successful program completers, 11% (n=25) were arrested within three years of program entry; 6% were arrested and charged with a misdemeanor crime and 5% with a felony crime.

Table 18: Rearrested within three years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	2017 Cohort	2018 Cohort	2019 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=320)
No new arrest	78%	90%	100%	87%	84%	72%	87%	86%
New misdemeanor arrest	18%	4%	0%	10%	3%	6%	4%	6%
New felony arrest	4%	6%	0%	3%	13%	22%	9%	8%
Among clients who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=23)	(n=19)	(n=53)	(n=224)
No new arrest	82%	90%	100%	88%	87%	74%	94%	89%
New misdemeanor arrest	15%	5%	0%	12%	4%	5%	2%	6%
New felony arrest	3%	5%	0%	0%	9%	21%	4%	5%

It is now possible to assess recidivism after six years among four of the cohorts. As seen below, 21% of Participants (n=39) who were enrolled between 2013 and 2016 were arrested within six years of enrollment. Among successful program completers, 19% (n=24) were arrested within six years of enrollment; 12% for a misdemeanor crime, 6% for a felony crime, and 1% for a technical violation misdemeanor.

Table 19: Rearrested within six years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=180)
No new arrest	65%	84%	98%	64%	79%
New misdemeanor arrest	26%	8%	0%	20%	13%
New felony arrest	9%	6%	2%	13%	7%
Technical violation misdemeanor	0%	2%	0%	3%	1%
Among clients who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=129)
No new arrest	69%	84%	97%	79%	81%
New misdemeanor arrest	23%	8%	0%	13%	12%
New felony arrest	8%	5%	3%	8%	6%
Technical violation misdemeanor	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%

Within three years of enrollment, 6% (n=21) of AFJ Participants were reconvicted within New York State, 2% were misdemeanor convictions and 4% were felony convictions (Table 20).⁵ Among successful program completers, 6% (n=12) were reconvicted within three years of enrollment; 3% were convicted of a misdemeanor crime and 3% with a felony crime.

Table 20: Reconvicted within three years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	2017 Cohort	2018 Cohort	2019 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=320)
No new conviction	87%	94%	100%	97%	94%	91%	92%	94%
New misdemeanor conviction	11%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
New felony conviction	2%	4%	0%	0%	6%	9%	8%	4%
Among clients who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=23)	(n=19)	(n=53)	(n=224)
No new conviction	90%	94%	100%	96%	91%	89%	98%	94%
New misdemeanor conviction	10%	3%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	3%
New felony conviction	0%	3%	0%	0%	9%	11%	2%	3%

Within six years of enrollment, 13% (n=24) of Participants who were enrolled between 2013 and 2016 were reconvicted. Among successful program completers, 12% (n=16) were reconvicted within six years of enrollment; 8% were reconvicted of a misdemeanor crime and 4% of a felony crime.

Table 21: Reconvicted within six years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=180)
No new conviction	70%	90%	100%	87%	87%
New misdemeanor conviction	24%	4%	0%	8%	9%
New felony conviction	6%	6%	0%	5%	4%
Among clients who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=129)
No new conviction	74%	90%	100%	92%	88%
New misdemeanor conviction	21%	5%	0%	4%	8%
New felony conviction	5%	5%	0%	4%	4%

Just 6% (n=18) of AFJ Participants were incarcerated within three years of their enrollment in AFJ, 2% were misdemeanor incarcerations and 4% were felony incarcerations (Table 22). Among successful program completers, 5% (n=11) were incarcerated within three years of enrollment; 2% were incarcerated on misdemeanor charges and 3% on felony charges.

Table 22: Incarcerated within three years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	2017 Cohort	2018 Cohort	2019 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=32)	(n=32)	(n=76)	(n=320)
No new incarceration	91%	94%	100%	97%	91%	91%	95%	94%
New misdemeanor incarceration	9%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
New felony incarceration	0%	4%	0%	0%	9%	9%	5%	4%
Among clients who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=23)	(n=19)	(n=53)	(n=224)
No new incarceration	92%	94%	100%	96%	91%	89%	98%	95%
New misdemeanor incarceration	8%	3%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	2%
New felony incarceration	0%	3%	0%	0%	9%	11%	2%	3%

⁵ Sixteen cases were still pending court outcome.

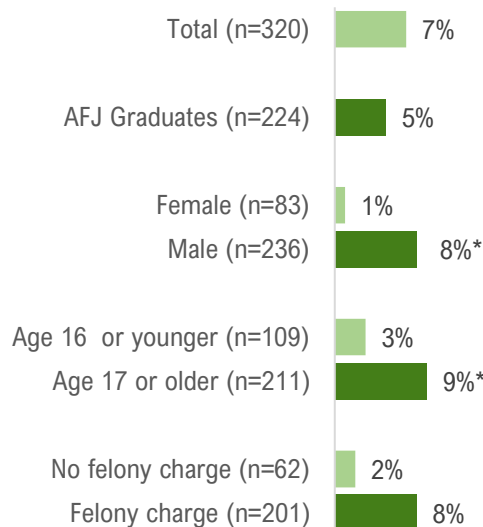
Within six years of enrollment, 12% (n=22) of AFJ Participants enrolled between 2013 and 2016 were incarcerated; 8% on misdemeanor charges and 4% on felony charges. Among successful program completers, 11% (n=14) were incarcerated; 7% were incarcerated on misdemeanor charges and 4% on felony charges.

Table 23: Incarcerated within six years of intake	2013 Cohort	2014 Cohort	2015 Cohort	2016 Cohort	Total
Among entire sample	(n=46)	(n=53)	(n=42)	(n=39)	(n=180)
No new incarceration	74%	92%	98%	87%	88%
New misdemeanor incarceration	20%	4%	0%	8%	8%
New felony incarceration	6%	4%	2%	5%	4%
Among participants who successfully completed program	(n=39)	(n=37)	(n=29)	(n=24)	(n=129)
No new incarceration	80%	92%	97%	92%	89%
New misdemeanor incarceration	15%	5%	0%	4%	7%
New felony incarceration	5%	3%	3%	4%	4%

Predictably, recidivism rates in the six-year studies were somewhat higher than in the three-year studies. But the six-year recidivism rates were still low in absolute terms and relative to traditional prosecution. This supports the conclusion that the Court-Involved program has a sustainable positive impact respecting recidivism.

Three-year reconviction rates were examined by Participant characteristics at program enrollment, combining all cohorts (Figure 3). Those with reconvictions were significantly more likely to be male and/or age 17 or older. Those who have had a felony charge at enrollment were also more likely to be reconvicted, but this difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 3
Reconviction rates by subgroup
(3 years after enrollment)



* Difference in reconviction rate is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

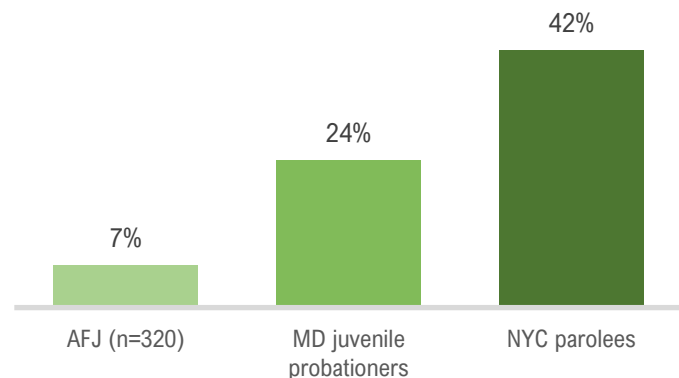
Comparison data

This section highlights comparison data from several studies, but caution should be used when considering comparison recidivism data. The design of a study will affect the reported recidivism rates. For example, recidivism may be defined as rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration. Some studies may include incarceration for technical violations while others may not. Further, study samples may include only prisoners or probationers, while others may include only juveniles or adults.

Although sampling techniques, sample characteristics, and definitions of recidivism and incarceration vary, published recidivism data suggest AFJ Participants have rearrest, reconviction, and incarceration rates considerably lower than comparison samples. The three-year AFJ reconviction rate is 7% compared to other studies (Figure 4). The six-year AFJ reconviction rate is 13% (compared to a 32% reconviction rate among federal offenders released in 2005 after eight years).

Overall, these recidivism data suggest the AFJ program provides promising outcomes for the Participants it serves.

Figure 4
Comparison 3-year reconviction rates



The following is a select list showing comparison rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration rates:

- A study of Maryland juvenile offenders with first-time probation dispositions found that within three years of the start date of community supervision, 55% were rearrested, 24% were reconvicted, and 13% were incarcerated.⁶
- A study published in 2011, found that 53% of New York City parolees were rearrested within three years, 42% were reconvicted within three years, and 29% were incarcerated.⁷
- Based on 2019 DART data, the New York City rearrest rate within one year was 25% among those who were 16-24 years old at time of arrest in Manhattan.⁸
- A 2016 report from the United States Sentencing Commission found that among more than 25,000 federal offenders released in 2005, 49% were rearrested, 32% were reconvicted, and 25% were reincarcerated over an eight-year follow-up period.⁹
- A 2015 report from the CSG Justice Center compiled recidivism data from 39 states and found that the highest reported recidivism rate (reinvolvement with the justice system) for juvenile offenders was 76% within three years, and 84% within five years.¹⁰
- Based on a 2005-2014, 30-state recidivism study among those aged 24 or younger the three-year rearrest rate was 76%, the six-year rearrest rate was 87%, and the nine-year rearrest rate was 90%.¹¹

⁶ Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. (December 2022). *Data Resource Guide: Fiscal Year 2022*. https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/DRG/Data_Resource_Guide_FY2022.pdf. Retrieved November 2023.

⁷ Herrschaft, B.A. & Hamilton, Z. (2011). *Recidivism Among Parolees in New York City, 2001-2008*. https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/Recidivism_Parolees_NYC.pdf. Retrieved November 2023.

⁸ New York City's Data Analytics Recidivism Tool (DART), v1.01. <http://recidivism.cityofnewyork.us>. Accessed August 2022.

⁹ Recidivism Among Federal Offenders: A Comprehensive Overview. United States Sentencing Commission. <https://www.ussc.gov/research/research-reports/recidivism-among-federal-offenders-comprehensive-overview>. Accessed November 2023.

¹⁰ 2015 CSG Justice Center report. <https://info.mstservices.com/blog/juvenile-recidivism-rates#:~:text=The%20study%20found%20that%20juveniles,the%20numbers%20are%20equally%20high>. Accessed November 2023.

¹¹ United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics (May 2018). NCJ 250875. Special Report – 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014) <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>. Accessed September 2020.

Participant Satisfaction

In 2021, AFJ began using an online SurveyMonkey® survey to gather satisfaction feedback information on an anonymous basis from Participants who had exited the program to gauge their opinions of the AFJ program regarding the staff, the services received, and program impact. The survey also seeks Participant suggestions on how the program can be improved. Sixty-two AFJ graduates have completed this survey.

Describing the Survey Sample

Of the 62 graduates that completed a satisfaction survey, most entered the program in the last four years and all but two completed the program between January 2021 and December 2023. The length of time in the program ranged from two months to 8.5 years, with a median length of stay of one year.

Table 24: Intake and Exit Information (n=62)		%
Year of program intake:		
2023		8%
2022		27%
2021		23%
2020		21%
Between 2013 and 2019		21%
Year of program exit:		
2023		39%
2022		32%
2021		26%
2020		3%

Rating the Program Content

Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most favorable rating, graduates rated the assistance they received from the AFJ program. As seen below, each of the services received were rated highly, all but one had an average rating of 4.0 or higher on the 5-point scale. Legal, educational, and vocational assistance were rated the highest, with average ratings of 4.6, 4.4, and 4.3 out of 5.0, respectively. Referrals to outside agencies was rated lowest, with an average of 3.8. Overall, AFJ services were rated very favorably, on average, 4.5 out of 5.0.

Table 25: Content ratings	(n)	1	2	3	4	5	Average rating
The legal assistance you received.	50	2%	-	10%	12%	76%	4.6
The educational assistance you received.	50	2%	-	14%	20%	64%	4.4
The vocational assistance you received.	44	5%	5%	13%	16%	61%	4.3
The financial/food assistance you received.	34	6%	9%	14%	12%	59%	4.1
The mental health assistance you received.	37	8%	-	19%	16%	57%	4.1
The physical health assistance you received.	34	9%	-	20%	15%	56%	4.1
The housing assistance you received.	26	12%	8%	12%	7%	61%	4.0
The substance use assistance you received.	30	7%	7%	13%	23%	50%	4.0
The family counseling assistance you received.	29	7%	7%	24%	7%	55%	4.0
The referrals you received to outside agencies.	42	12%	7%	19%	10%	52%	3.8
The overall services you received at AFJ.	59	2%	7%	7%	13%	71%	4.5

Note: Content ratings are based on those who received these services. In other words, if a graduate did not receive a service, a rating was not provided. Thus, the sample size fluctuates across content ratings.

Rating AFJ Staff and Other Aspects of the Program

Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most favorable rating, graduates rated the helpfulness of the AFJ staff and court advocates, the information provided and the frequency of contact. As seen below, all of the items listed were rated highly, with each receiving a rating of 4.2 or greater. The highest ratings, on average, were given to the helpfulness of the AFJ staff and court advocates both with a mean of 4.7 out of 5.0.

Table 26: Staff ratings	(n)	1	2	3	4	5	Average rating
The helpfulness of AFJ staff.	61	2%	2%	5%	11%	80%	4.7
The helpfulness of the court advocates.	54	-	2%	7%	7%	84%	4.7
The information provided by AFJ staff.	61	2%	3%	8%	10%	77%	4.6
The information provided by court advocates.	53	4%	2%	9%	6%	79%	4.5
The frequency of contact from AFJ staff.	58	2%	2%	12%	10%	74%	4.5
The frequency of contact from court advocates.	51	8%	4%	12%	10%	66%	4.2

Graduates indicated how helpful they thought the AFJ program was to them regarding numerous mental health concepts, relationships, decision making, peer pressure, education, employment, and managing alcohol/substance use (using a 4-point scale where 1 = 'not helpful at all' and 4 = 'very helpful'). Table 27 shows the percentage of responses within each category, as well as the average item rating. As seen here, the ratings ranged from an average of 2.7 to 3.3 on the 4-point scale. The areas with the highest ratings included: making smart decisions (rating of 3.3), having feelings of hope for the future (3.1), and resisting peer pressure (3.1). Graduates were less inclined to feel the AFJ program helped them with feelings of isolation or feeling as though they are part of a community, with ratings of 2.7 and 2.8, respectively.

Table 27: Helpfulness of the program	(n)	Not helpful at all	Somewhat helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	Average rating
Making smart decisions	60	2%	11%	45%	42%	3.3
Having feelings of hope for your future	61	3%	19%	39%	39%	3.1
Resisting peer pressure	61	2%	13%	54%	31%	3.1
Improving your self-esteem	61	5%	18%	51%	26%	3.0
Exposure to new possibilities & experiences	61	3%	21%	43%	33%	3.0
Your education	61	7%	20%	39%	34%	3.0
Your mental health	60	8%	17%	42%	33%	3.0
Knowing and expressing your feelings	61	8%	18%	51%	23%	2.9
Improved relationships with family & friends	61	11%	17%	44%	28%	2.9
Your employment/job readiness	60	12%	16%	42%	30%	2.9
Managing alcohol/substance abuse	60	13%	13%	49%	25%	2.9
Feeling part of a community	61	11%	20%	46%	23%	2.8
Feeling less isolated	61	16%	20%	41%	23%	2.7

When asked what they liked best about the program, responses fell into three main categories: the staff and community of people, the support or services received, and the welcoming environment. Several Participants simply said they liked everything about the program.

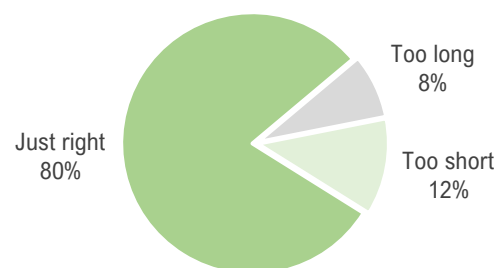
“{What I liked best about the program was} the staff and the interest they showed in helping.”

“Job help and career development.”

“The family friendly environment. It’s been years and I still feel like AFJ still treats me like family!”

Graduates were asked to describe their length of participation at AFJ using the choices, “Too long,” “Too short,” or “Just right.” Eight in ten reported their length of time at AFJ was just right (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Length of Participation



Assessing Program Impact

As seen in Table 28, 85% of the graduates agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “My life has improved as a result of AFJ”. Graduates rated this item, on average, at 3.2 out of 4.0 (using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 ‘strongly agree’ to 4 ‘strongly disagree’; this item was reverse coded so higher numbers were more favorable).

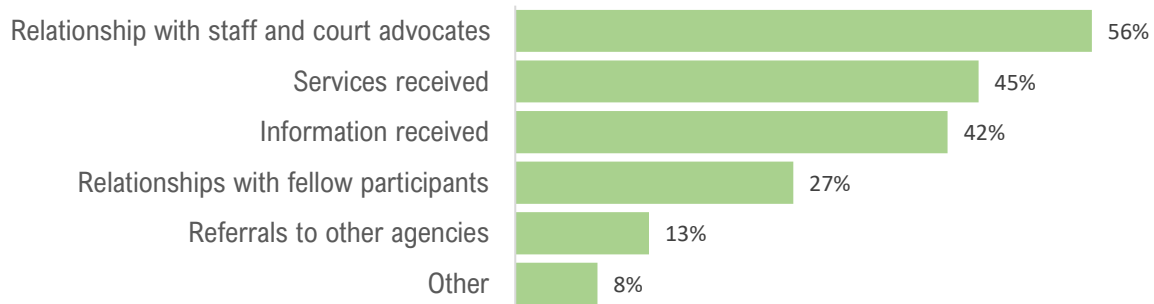
Table 28: Rating impact of program	(n)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average rating
My life has improved as a result of AFJ.	62	40%	45%	13%	2%	3.2

“{My court advocate} was nothing but great to me. We also built a personal bond.”

“AFJ definitely is a place that kids and youth can look forward to going to after school or when things seem tough. They are always willing to help!”

Fifty-six percent of the graduates reported their relationship with staff and court advocates was the most impactful part of their AFJ experience (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Most Impactful Part of AFJ Experience



Most survey respondents said they would not change anything at AFJ. A few suggested program changes including: more freedom for Participants, start and end times, amount of time on zoom call, more locations, bigger space, better communication with staff, and offering more programs. Lastly, all but three of these 62 graduates would recommend the program to other young people involved with the criminal justice system.

Summary

This 2023 Annual Report is a statistical presentation of Avenues for Justice's program over the past year, as well as longer-term outcomes of recidivism and Participant satisfaction for those Participants no longer in the program. The Report reflects four key recent mutually reinforcing developments at AFJ: 1) AFJ's expansion of its service area from two neighborhoods (Lower East Side and Harlem) in Manhattan to all five boroughs, 2) AFJ's increasing involvement in the New York City Family Court Diversion Program and a City-sponsored Re-entry Program for Incarcerated Youth, 3) AFJ's expansion of its program offerings mainly through the build-out of the HIRE-Up program and 4) AFJ's successful implementation of a hybrid onsite/digital platform. As a result of these changes, AFJ's is serving more Participants than ever with a more fulsome program. These Participants are younger, more geographically dispersed and complete the program in a shorter period of time.

Expanded service area: In 2018-2019 AFJ expanded its service area from Manhattan to citywide. In 2023, 35% of Participants overall were from Manhattan and 65% were from the outer boroughs, 70% of new intakes were from the outer boroughs.

Participants served: During 2023, AFJ worked with 296 Court-Involved Participants. One hundred thirty-two of these Participants entered in 2023, by far AFJ's largest one year intake. In 2023, 142 Participants exited the Court-Involved program; 97% completed the program, with 76% achieving all program goals. Just 3% exited the program without completion.

Additionally, 221 At-Risk Participants engaged in HIRE Up virtual and onsite programs through AFJ's two community centers. The majority of the Court-Involved youth were Hispanic/Latino or Black/African American, male, and/or 18 years of age or younger at enrollment. There were 10,531 recorded encounters during 2023 and 145 referrals were provided.

AFJ's increased involvement in innovative programs: In 2021, AFJ became involved in two programs which are now part of AFJ's Court-Involved program: a program for incarcerated young people preparing to re-enter the community and the New York City Law Department's Family Court Division's Diversion program. Those from the Diversion division are mandated to attend AFJ for typically 4 to 16 sessions over a 60-day period. In 2023, 47% of new Participants were Diversion youth. In 2023, AFJ served 65 Re-entry Participants – these 65 are included in the 296 Court-Involved count and information.

Expanded program offerings: AFJ continued to expand its HIRE Up program launched in 2020, offering more than 15 workshops in 2023, including topic areas focusing on digital literacy, teen empowerment, legal rights and responsibilities, mental health, job readiness, careers, and financial literacy. The career offerings included the OSHA 30-hour construction safety training.

Court advocacy: Of the cases that had court outcomes during 2023, 70% were adjourned and 17% were dismissed.

Recidivism: Recidivism data have been collected for many years and continue to be among the lowest in the nation. Since 2013, the three-year AFJ reconviction rate has been just 6%, while the six-year rate has been 13%. Both rates are considerably lower than comparison samples.

Expanded evaluation: AFJ continued its recent initiative to gather client satisfaction information from program graduates in 2023. Sixty-two graduates have participated in this study to date. These past Participants gave very favorable ratings to the services they received from AFJ, the staff, program organization, and feelings of program impact. These results suggest Participants valued their time at AFJ and nearly all would recommend the program to young people involved with the criminal justice system.