

# The Youth Comprehensive Risk Assessment (YCRA): A Proven Performance Measurement System for Residential Care

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## Background Information

### Development of a Comprehensive Risk Assessment Process and Instrumentation called the YCRA

The genesis of the YCRA started over 30 years ago with staff at the adolescent treatment facility, specifically, to investigate the presence of **common factors among adolescent clients who failed to successfully complete their treatment programs**. Case reviews suggested that the **most prominent prediction factors** for program failure included high run-away risks, multiple prior placements, aggression, substance use, and poor family resources.

The YCRA was submitted and **approved as a performance measurement system** with The Joint Commission (TJC) for the Accreditation of Health Organizations (formerly the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Health Organizations JCAHO) (1998). Per TJC approved definition, the YCRA is specifically defined as a clinical assessment process utilized by trained mental health professionals to systematically gather information and make clinical judgments related to six risk areas.



## SIX (6) Risk Areas

- Risk to Self
- Risk to Others
- Social Adaptive Functioning
- Substance Abuse
- Family Resources
- Degree of Structure Needed



## Levels of Care

YCRA Risk Assessment and *Level of Care* recommended:

Score Range (recommended)

1-21= Level I (community-based services, out-patient therapy, etc.)

22-36= Level II (intensive out-patient therapy)

37-57= Level III (group home, therapeutic foster care, crisis center, less restricted residential treatment program)

>58= Level IV (psychiatric hospital, detention facility)

### TYPES

**Thrivers** = per the YCRA, a score below 12 on risk to self and below 12 on risk to others, indicating less predicted time in residential care.

- Typically about 25% of the population

**Highly Distressed**= per the YCRA, a score above 12 on risk to self and a score below 12 on risk to others, indicating more predicted time in residential care.

- Typically about 30% of the population

**Resisters** = per the YCRA, a score below 12 on risk to self and above 12 risk to others, indicating more predicted time in residential care.

- Typically about 15% of the population

**Highly Distressed Resister** = per the YCRA, a score above 12 on risk to self and above 12 on risk to others, indicating most predicted time in residential care.

- Typically about 30% of the population

### Did you know:

The YCRA has high utility in distinguishing important youth risk patterns (other than Thrivers, Highly Distressed, Resister, and Highly Distressed Resister). In a recent study, higher risk youth (see checklist below) were reported to have significantly **more problems** with social functioning and substance abuse and needed a significantly higher degree of structure in treatment. They also exhibited a significantly higher risk to self and to others. (Coll, et al, 2009)

### Higher/Lower Risk Identification Checklist

A four-point checklist specifically noted:

- a high chemical abuse profile,
- the number of conduct disordered behaviors within the last three to six months equal to or greater than three,
- criminal thinking score of “at least half the time” based on Samenow’s thinking errors (1-5 scale), and
- a “disengaged” cohesion score of 31 or below

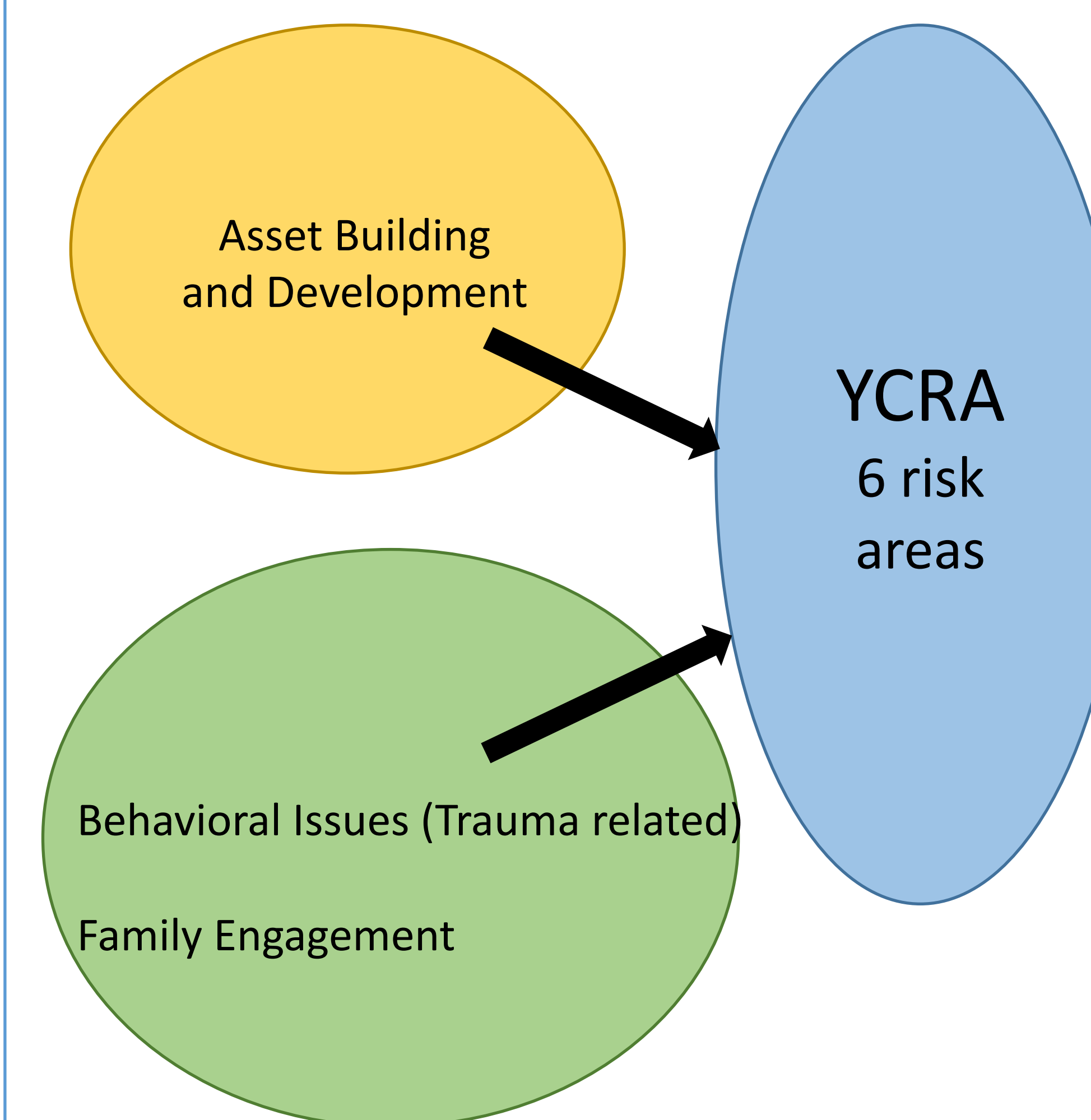
## Did You Know

### Did you know:

The YCRA has **significant utility in assessing entering adolescent offenders for substance abuse**. The results of a recent study suggest that adolescent offenders who score high on the YCRA in Substance Abuse may well have other risks that are more severe and that require immediate attention. **Higher substance abuse is significantly associated with such factors as risk to self and social and adaptive functioning**. These results suggest that many of these youths are self-medicating due to very poor coping skills and are in desperate need of help. Hence, **by reducing depression and despair, increasing social skills, and improving family relations, treatment programs can promote greater recovery from substance abuse and/or addiction**. Gender-related results suggest that girls are initially be more open to admitting substance abuse and personal character defects; however, they are more self-critical. Conversely, boys seem to initially admit less substance abuse and are less self-critical (Coll, et al, 2003).

### Did you know:

The YCRA is useful for outcome evaluation. For example, a recent study indicated that **youth from an accredited treatment center made significantly more treatment progress**. Even though the youth from a Joint Commission (TJC) accredited site began treatment with significantly higher risk in 4 of the 6 YCRA areas, they were at significantly lower risk than the non-TJC youth in the areas of risk to self, social/adaptive functioning, substance abuse risk, and family resources. Intentionality of treatment using the YCRA was indicated as one of the reasons for these dramatic post-treatment differences. (Coll, et al., 2014).



## Implementation and Helping the Helper

- Staff Training
- Logic Model
- Clinical Supervision
- Integration with School



## References

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