

R.A.D.A.R.

(Re-engaging Academically Disconnected Adolescents Respectfully)

PROGRAM & DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

Pilot Phase (October 2008 – November 2009)

Final Report

Completed for the R.A.D.A.R Executive Committee
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December 2009

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Executive Summary

1. Background

This report provides a summary of the R.A.D.A.R. initiative's development and activities during its pilot year of operations from October 2008 – November 2009, along with findings from the program and developmental evaluations. It includes an overview of the evaluation process; program highlights; participant data; evaluation findings; conclusions and recommendations moving forward.

The R.A.D.A.R. initiative began in October 2008 with seed funding from the United Way, the Burns Memorial Fund, City of Calgary Crime Prevention Investment Plan and Education Matters. Business Fore Kids also donated a bus to enable R.A.D.A.R. youth to take part in field trips. R.A.D.A.R. is designed to fill a gap in supports for Calgary youth aged 13-15 who are on the spectrum of homelessness and disconnected from family, school and community. These youth have an accumulation of risk factors that include: school non-attendance, criminal involvement, exposure to gang involvement and sexual exploitation, substance abuse and addictions, mental health issues, family conflict, lack of supportive adults in their lives and the influence of negative peer groups. The multi-layered needs of these youth, coupled with the developmental stage of early adolescence, highlight the importance of a coordinated and flexible approach. To this end, a group of organizations representing education, health, youth shelters, children's services and youth justice have joined together to reconnect these youth to the essential supports of school, family and community.

R.A.D.A.R.'s Theory of Change

If youth 12-15 years old who are disconnected from family, school and community and at risk of entrenchment in street life, have access to individualized educational, personal and recreation supports provided through agency collaboration, then they are more likely to return to school, find and maintain a stable living environment and have positive relationships.

2. Evaluation Overview

The R.A.D.A.R. evaluation is being conducted by two external consultants in consultation with an Executive Committee comprised of R.A.D.A.R. partners and R.A.D.A.R.'s project manager. The program evaluator focused on tracking individual and programmatic outcomes. The developmental evaluator focused on supporting the collaborative process and works to capture systems-level change and impacts. The evaluators work jointly to support learning to strengthen program delivery.

The primary purpose of the evaluation is utility: the evaluative analysis is intended to strengthen our understanding of what works within the initiative, why and for whom, so

that we can make the initiative itself more effective and support learning across youth serving systems. As such, the evaluation was designed to focus on three areas:

- Measuring the effectiveness of program interventions to enable multi-risk youth to access essential services and supports; establish or re-establish a stable residential setting; reconnect with family and supportive adults; and transition back into appropriate school settings
- Generating information and lessons to strengthen R.A.D.A.R. programming and inform practice and policy decisions related to multi-risk youth and their families in Alberta
- Tracking the effect of the R.A.D.A.R. initiative on other youth serving systems (education, justice, health and social services)

3. Participant Data

Between October 2008 and November 2009 a total of 50 youth were referred to R.A.D.A.R. Intake information for 40 of the 50 youth is complete. From this information we know that:

- the average age of youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. is 15-years-old
- 8% have an immigrant background
- 43% are of Aboriginal descent
- 45% of youth were on probation at the time of referral and another 18% have had previous criminal involvement. This means a total of 63% of the R.A.D.A.R. youth have had some form of criminal involvement.

The average length of disengagement from school for youth referred to the initiative is 17 months. The degree of disengagement varies among the youth but most have not had regular attendance for more than three school semesters.

40% of youth referred were accessing homeless shelters, couch surfing and/or living on the street at the time of referral. 70 % of all youth referred have at some time in their lives experienced homelessness. 24% of youth were living at home; 10% were living with extended family; 10% were living in a group home; 6% were at the Calgary Young Offenders Centre (CYOC); the whereabouts of 8% was not known at referral; and, one (2%) was living in a foster home.

96% percent of the youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. have some history of involvement with child welfare, including those identified under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act (PSECA). Thirteen out of 50 youth (26%) have no *current* involvement while 36% are permanent guardians of Alberta Children and Youth Services.

Analysis of this demographic data indicates that, overall, the number and type of youth being referred match the eligibility criteria and demonstrates the need for this type of coordinated, flexible and holistic programming and collaborative provision of supports.

4. Summary of Evaluation Findings

The findings from the program evaluation indicate that the combination of R.A.D.A.R. programming and supports is effective to engage, stabilize and reconnect at-risk youth to community schools and stable residential settings. During its first year of operation (October 2008 – November 2009), working with limited staff and a range of partners, the initiative received referrals for 50 youth. Of these, a total of 16 participated actively (in attendance more than 50% of the time) in the educational programming, six were connected to other supports and six are new referrals.

Of the remaining youth, there were a number who engaged sporadically and then disengaged. Keeping track of these youth with limited staff was difficult last year however, moving forward, it will be important to understand why some youth engage and others don't, and to build strategies to more effectively connect with those who don't. The addition of a recreation worker and two transition workers has already begun to strengthen the 'outreach' community component of the initiative and is expected to increase R.A.D.A.R.'s capacity to support youth not yet ready or inappropriate for the classroom.

Perhaps most significantly R.A.D.A.R. supported six youth, all of whom were seriously disengaged from school, to successfully transition back to community school programs. Four of these youth are attending classes more than 80% of the time; all have maintained safe and stable places to live; and, none have been criminally charged or breached probation. Considering the history of these youth and the multiple risk factors with which they present, it is unlikely that these six youth would be experiencing these positive changes without the supports provided by R.A.D.A.R.

Information to strengthen program delivery and the collaborative process is being captured and there are good indications that this information will be used by the committees and staff to support efforts for continuous improvement. R.A.D.A.R.'s primary challenge at the program level will be to maintain sufficient engagement (in both quantity and duration of supports) with participating youth to make a positive difference in their lives. The challenge for the collaboration is ensuring the right partners come to and stay at the table at the

*"My life is going really good. I'm living in a group home and everything, going to school everyday. It's pretty good. It's cool that Courtney (transition worker) keeps track of what I am doing and stuff... Without R.A.D.A.R. I think I would still be doing the stuff I was doing before... stealing cars, doing drugs and not going to school... I think I was ready to make some changes but there was no way I could have gone straight into a community Junior High... R.A.D.A.R. is a good school, more supportive and they actually talk to you, they don't assume stuff."
(transitioned youth, Nov. 18/09).*

same time that the Executive Committee stays focused on affecting systems level change.

R.A.D.A.R. is now fully operational, has a complete team of staff and is fully funded for three years by the Safe Communities Innovation Fund, the City of Calgary, the CBE, the CSSD and an anonymous funder. Overall, R.A.D.A.R. has achieved many accomplishments in its first year, and there is every indication that the initiative will demonstrate even greater success during this next school year and beyond.

1.0 Introduction

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The R.A.D.A.R. initiative began in October 2008 with seed funding from the United Way, the Burns Memorial Fund, City of Calgary Crime Prevention Investment Plan and Education Matters. Business Fore Kids also donated a bus to enable R.A.D.A.R. youth to take part in field trips. R.A.D.A.R. is designed to fill a gap in supports for Calgary youth aged 13-15 who are on the spectrum of homelessness and disconnected from family, school and community. These youth have an accumulation of risk factors that include: school non-attendance, criminal involvement, exposure to gang involvement and sexual exploitation, substance abuse and addictions, mental health issues, family conflict, lack of supportive adults in their lives and the influence of negative peer groups. The multi-layered needs of these youth, coupled with the developmental stage of early adolescence, highlight the importance of a coordinated and flexible approach. To this end, a group of organizations representing education, health, youth shelters, children's services and youth justice have joined together to reconnect these youth to the essential supports of school, family and community. R.A.D.A.R.'s key partners are:

- Wood's Homes
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
- Calgary Board of Education
- Calgary Catholic School District
- City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services (Youth Probation)
- Alberta Health Services, Calgary Health Region (Child & Adolescent Mental Health)
- Calgary and Area, Child and Family Services Authority
- Calgary and Area United Way
- Burns Memorial Fund

These agencies provided in-kind contributions to supply R.A.D.A.R. youth with access to a range of professionals and services. The partners work together to develop coordinated service delivery plans to enable participating youth to have their essential needs met. These needs include finding stable living conditions; access to mental health workers, physicians, and addictions counsellors; reconnecting with family and developing positive relationships with supportive caring adults; and, access and participation in recreational activities (See Appendix A for a detailed illustration of supports available to R.A.D.A.R. youth). While the initiative is focused on providing these direct supports to disengaged youth, the collaborative partners also hope to work to affect organizational, policy and systems level change to strengthen services to multi-

risk youth over the longer term. The goal of R.A.D.A.R. is to support homeless and/or academically disengaged youth to reconnect with normative supports of school, family and community and, ultimately, to succeed.

The R.A.D.A.R. theory of change is provided in Box 1 below.

Box 1. Theory of Change

If youth 12-15 years old who are disconnected from family, school and community and at risk of entrenchment in street life, have access to individualized educational, personal and recreation supports provided through agency collaboration, then they are more likely to return to school, find and maintain a stable living environment and have positive relationships.

2.0 Evaluation Overview

The R.A.D.A.R. evaluation is being conducted by two external consultants in consultation with an Executive Committee comprised of R.A.D.A.R. partners and R.A.D.A.R.'s project manager. The program evaluator is focused on tracking individual and programmatic outcomes. The developmental evaluator is focused on supporting the collaborative process and works to capture systems-level change and impacts. The evaluators work jointly to support learning to strengthen program delivery.

2.1 Purpose and Methodology

The primary purpose of the evaluation is utility: the evaluative analysis is intended to strengthen our understanding of what works within the initiative, why and for whom, so that we can make the initiative itself more effective and support learning across youth serving systems. As such, the evaluation was designed to focus on three areas:

- Measuring the effectiveness of program interventions to enable multi-risk youth to access essential services and supports; establish or re-establish a stable residential setting; reconnect with family and supportive adults; and transition back into appropriate school settings
- Generating information and lessons to strengthen R.A.D.A.R. programming and inform practice and policy decisions related to multi-risk youth and their families in Alberta
- Tracking the effect of the R.A.D.A.R. initiative on other youth serving systems (education, justice, health and social services)

The evaluation of the pilot phase had three components. The first was the preparation of an evaluation plan to guide the overall process. This plan included a change framework (Appendix B) that describes what R.A.D.A.R. is expected to achieve

(outputs/outcomes/impact), how (activities) and why (assumptions) we think these results will be achieved. It also included a data collection plan (Appendix C) that sets out program level results, identified relevant indicators, data collection methods, timing and responsibility.

Phase two involved the establishment of information management systems; the review and revision of indicators to measure progress among youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. ; and the analysis of preliminary findings. This information is contained in the interim report that was prepared in June 2009.

The final phase involved an assessment of progress made and lessons learned by the R.A.D.A.R. initiative in its first year of operations. This analysis captured findings at three levels: changes among youth participating in R.A.D.A.R. programming; the capacity of the collaborative to effectively deliver the program; and the impact of the initiative on youth serving systems. Methods used to make this assessment include an analysis of progress based on indicators set out in the logic model. Data was gathered through a review of client files, monthly summaries, teacher's reports as well as reports from R.A.D.A.R.'s recreation and transition staff. This information was supplemented by surveys with 11 participating youth and autobiographical stories created by two¹ youth; one who continues to be enrolled in the R.A.D.A.R. classroom and the other who has transitioned back to a community school. A summary of developmental findings gathered through participation on the committees, formal interviews and group processing workshops is presented in Section 6.0 of this report. Appendices C - E contain the data collection methods; the Youth Satisfaction Survey; and the interview protocol for staff and key partners.

2.2 Challenges and Limitations of the Evaluation

Over the course of the pilot period (October 2008 – November 2009) three main challenges emerged in regards to the evaluation process.

2.2.1 Defining Success

The innovative nature of the R.A.D.A.R. initiative coupled with the range of youth who are participating in the program has made it difficult to establish a clear definition of program level success. Over the pilot period we were unable to determine reasonable targets in terms of the number of youth R.A.D.A.R. could be expected to serve and successfully reconnect to community schools, family, peers and the broader community.

¹ Efforts were made to gather autobiographical stories from 4 of the transitioned youth and 2 currently participating youth. Only two of youth were willing to share their story (one transitioned and one active). R.A.D.A.R. staff felt that youth who recently began participating were not yet ready to talk about their experience with the programming.

Research into other programs working to engage at-risk and vulnerable youth suggests that this challenge is not unique to R.A.D.A.R.

For example, the Boyle Street Education Centre (BSEC) in Edmonton, which started more than 15 years ago in much the same way as R.A.D.A.R., is still not able to predict with any kind of certainty the number of youth that it will successfully graduate from high school in any given year. Shirley Minard, the Principal at BSEC, explained that their Board made the decision to stop trying to set program targets and to focus more on establishing individualized goals and measures of successes for each student². The unpredictability of life circumstances among the students and their tendency to engage, disengage and re-engage in programming over the course of a year requires flexibility and individualized programming that does not lend itself well to fixed targets. A review of documents related to the Inner City High School in Edmonton and the Etobicoke Year Round Alternative Centre suggest that these programs face similar challenges in establishing a standardized notion of success and have opted for individualized goal setting³.

It is apparent from this first year of programming that R.A.D.A.R. youth are similarly unpredictable and that the R.A.D.A.R. committees will face the same challenges in setting targets. Thus, as the evaluation moves forward over the next three years we will work to meet the referral targets that were set out in the Safe Communities Innovation Fund (SCIF) proposal but we will not try to establish any kind of fixed target in terms of numbers of youth we expect to successfully transition and reconnect with school, family and community. The R.A.D.A.R. team will continue to work with each youth to create service plans that include individualized supports and set individualized goals.

2.2.2 Measuring Effectiveness

Related to the challenge of setting targets and defining success for the program is the challenge of measuring its longer-term effectiveness to engage and reconnect youth. Using standardized measures is difficult because each youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. is coming from a different starting place. One youth may have more recently come up against challenges at home and in school that have led to time on the street and/or involvement with youth justice. Another youth may have experienced a lifetime of struggle with a history of child welfare involvement, addictions and neglect. The first youth may come to R.A.D.A.R., attend the school component regularly, connect with the teachers, resolve issues and reconnect with his or her family, and then transition back to a community school within six months. The second youth may have very sporadic attendance, may show up consistently for a few weeks, connect with teachers and peers, then become absent for a month, and later reappear looking for support and

² Interview with Shirley Minard, November 11, 2009.

³ Inner City High School Three Year Education Plan; www.innercity.ca/docs/3%20Year%20Plan%202007-2010.doc; Etobicoke Year Round Alternative Centre, Program Brochure; www.tdsb.on.ca/profiles/Brochure/2906.pdf

stability. There are many, and often intersecting, factors beyond the control of the initiative that affect the degree to which youth are engaged and reconnected through the supports provided. An evaluation that uses a standard set of indicators to measure the effect of the initiative on these two individuals will not adequately capture the differences between these youth nor will it accurately reflect the ways in which the programming is positively affecting them.

As such, the evaluation uses an array of qualitative information about the youth to measure individual progress against the indicators set out in the data collection plan. Youth surveys, teachers' progress reports, recreation connector and transition worker reports and client files are all reviewed in an effort to more accurately gauge the affect of R.A.D.A.R.'s programming on the participating youth. For the pilot phase, the evaluation has analyzed and collated individualized information about each of the youth to provide a preliminary assessment of the initiative's overall effectiveness. Over the coming years, it will be important for the evaluation to support greater understanding of what keeps these youth engaged and ways to re-engage them when issues in their lives pull them back to at-risk behaviours and situations.

2.2.3 Strengthening Data Collection

A third challenge related to the first two is the creation and rigorous utilization of data collection protocols. Data collection tools are still being refined at the same time that data is not collected consistently by program staff. During the first nine months of operations, the evaluator relied heavily on the teacher's anecdotal reports to assess progress among participating youth. Since July, with the addition of the transition and recreation workers, we have been working to create more standardized protocols and to gather additional information about the youth based on the indicators in the change framework. Data collection problems are common during the first year of any new program, but they must now be addressed through the finalization of, and rigorous adherence to, the protocols. Over the next three years, staff will receive ongoing and increased support from the evaluator to ensure we are gathering sufficient, reliable information to measure change in the youth and assess the effectiveness of the initiative.

3.0 Initiative Highlights & Programming for the Pilot Phase

3.1 October 2008 – June 2009

R.A.D.A.R. opened its doors and began to offer programming in October 2008. Between October 2008 and June 2009, a total of 35 youth were referred to R.A.D.A.R. All of the youth referred were disconnected from their families and/or homes and had been out of school for periods of time that ranged from six months to 5 years.

During the first nine months of operation the R.A.D.A.R. team was comprised of a Program Co-ordinator, a full-time teacher, a half-time teacher and a full-time behaviour support worker. The Program Coordinator was, and continues to be, essential to referral processes, triage, case management, communication among the partners and overall monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

There were not sufficient funds during the first phase to hire the transition or recreation workers that were a part of the R.A.D.A.R. design. As a result, the bulk of the programming was provided through the educational component of the initiative with teaching and support staff from the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District. During school hours there were opportunities for youth to participate in recreational activities in the gym and to make meals together. In addition, BGCC staff attached to SCRIPT (a program that provides outreach, system navigation and support to at-risk youth in the community) supported R.A.D.A.R. youth to take part in a range of activities that included: employment searching, transportation to meetings, informal dialogue about relationships, meeting basic needs (buying shoes, clothes, etc., when youth were in need), accessing shelters, planning and accessing recreational activities, signing up for summer camps.

As a successful recipient of SCIF funding in June 2009, the initiative was able to hire three additional staff. These positions complete the full R.A.D.A.R. team and complement the classroom with community-focused staff to connect youth to supports beyond the education component of the program. These positions are:

- Two Transition Support Workers provide outreach support and connect with youth who are staying at the youth shelters. They are one of the main entry points to R.A.D.A.R. supports and act as a system navigator for youth throughout their involvement with the program. For youth who continue to attend their community school, the transition workers provide supports to get to and from school and to resolve issues so that these youth maintain their connection.

The transition workers advocate for the youth and provide one-on-one support to ensure youth meet their basic needs and obligations. Examples of support include arranging and transportation to medical and mental health appointments, probation meetings and court dates; supporting youth who have been transitioned back to a community school to maintain their placements, resolve issues and help meet their basic needs.

- The Recreation Connector provides R.A.D.A.R. youth with an opportunity to interact with peers and the community and to strengthen their social and life skills. RADAR offers formal recreation activities to all youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. and helps youth to connect to activities in their communities. R.A.D.A.R.'s recreational programming is considered particularly important for those youth who are not yet ready for the education component of the initiative.

Most importantly, the addition of the transition and recreation workers is expected to significantly increase the capacity of the initiative to meet youth in the community, work with them one-on-one to build trust and stability, and, when appropriate, bring them into the education programming at the Hangar.

3.2 July 2009 – August 2009

In July and August 2009, R.A.D.A.R. offered a summer recreation program to provide youth with the opportunity to take part in positive activities and mitigate the influence of negative peer groups associated with street life. The program was offered to youth who attended R.A.D.A.R. during the past school year as well as to youth living at either EXIT or Ave 15 youth shelter. There were a total of 35 youth who participated in a variety of recreation activities over the summer, such as life skills, hiking, swimming, watching movies and trips to Calaway Park.

Staff also supported youth to look for employment, find stable housing and/or maintain their current housing. They helped youth and their families to get ready to return to R.A.D.A.R.'s educational programming or to start at a community school in September.

3.3 September 2009 – November 2009

R.A.D.A.R.'s educational programming resumed in September 2009. Between September and November 2009 there have been eight youth active in the classroom, two returning from last year and six who are new this year. At the time of writing, there are an additional six new referrals that are being triaged by the Operational Committee. There are another three youth who are receiving support from R.A.D.A.R. recreation and transition workers but who are not currently appropriate for R.A.D.A.R.'s classroom.

Recreational programming is being offered to R.A.D.A.R. youth on Tuesday evenings, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays after school. Activities included watching movies, walk/jogging, scavenger hunts, dance classes and Boardworx⁴. The recreation and transition workers continue to support R.A.D.A.R. youth, transitioned youth and potential R.A.D.A.R. youth to meet their basic needs, resolve issues at their place of residence, fulfill probation requirements, help with access to medical care, and stay engaged in the school placements.

⁴ The Community Boardworx Project is a collaboration between Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, Urban Youth Worx, Metro newspaper, the Calgary Downtown Association, and the City of Calgary - Community and Neighbourhood Services that brings together artists and youth to paint the boards that go up around construction sites in the city.

4.0 Participant Data

4.1 Who are R.A.D.A.R. Youth?

Between October 2008 and November 2009 a total of 50 youth were referred to R.A.D.A.R. Intake information for 40 of the 50 youth is complete. From this information we know that:

- the average age of youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. is 15-years-old
- 8% have an immigrant background
- 43% are of Aboriginal descent
- 45% of youth were on probation at the time of referral and another 18% have previous criminal involvement. This means a total of 62% of the R.A.D.A.R. youth have had some form of criminal involvement.

Table 1. Age at time of referral

	#	%
13 years old	9	18%
14 years old	12	25%
15 years old	25	51%
16 years old	3	6%
Total	49	100.0%

The average length of disengagement from school for youth referred to the initiative is 17 months. The degree of disengagement varies among the youth but most have not had regular attendance for more than three school semesters.

As shown in Table 1, 40% of youth referred were accessing homeless shelters, couch surfing and/or living on the street at the time of referral. 24% of youth were living at home; 10% were living with extended family; 10% were living in a group home; 6% were at the Calgary Young Offenders Centre (CYOC); the whereabouts of 8% was not known at referral; and, one (2%) was living in a foster home.

Table 2. Living Situation at Referral

	#	%
Living in Shelter/Street	20	40 %
Living at Home	12 ⁵	24 %
Living with Extended Family	5 ⁶	10 %
Living in a Group Home	5	10 %
At CYOC	3	6 %
Unknown (AWOL)	4	8%
Living in a foster home	1	2%
Total	50	100.0%

96% percent of the youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. have some *history* of involvement with child welfare, including those identified under the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act (PSECA). Thirteen out of 50 youth (26%) have no *current* involvement while 36% are permanent guardians of Alberta Children and Youth Services⁷. A total of 74% of youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. have some form of child welfare involvement at the time of referral (Table 2).

Table 3. Child welfare status at time of referral

	#	%
No Involvement	13	26%
Permanent Guardianship Order	18	36%
Temporary Guardianship Order	4	8 %
Custody Agreement	3	6 %
Family Enhancement	5	10 %
Under investigation	6	12 %
PSECA only	1	2 %
Total	50	100.0%
PSECA & other status	6	12 %

School board information was available for 47 of the youth. Thirty-three (70%) of these are registered with the Calgary Board of Education; 13 (28%) are with the Calgary Catholic School District; and one is outside Calgary's districts (Table 3).

⁵ Two youth are under permanent guardianship orders but are currently living at home.

⁶ Two youth are under permanent guardianship orders and currently living with extended family.

⁷ Child intervention services are provided in Alberta through local offices in 10 Child and Family Services Authorities and 18 Delegated First Nation Agencies. In Calgary, these services are provided through the Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority.

Table 4. School Board Information

	#	%
CBE	33	70%
CCSD	13	28%
Other	1	2 %
Total	47	100.0%

4.2 Analysis and Implications

This summary of demographic information tells us a number of things about the youth being connected to R.A.D.A.R. Most of the participating youth are older than the Committee's had originally anticipated. Over time, this may have implications for the type of educational programming that R.A.D.A.R. provides. Considering the number of youth who are under permanent guardianship orders and who have had previous involvement in criminal activity, the involvement of the child welfare and youth justice systems as partners in the initiative will continue to be important to its success. Overall the number and type of youth being referred match the eligibility criteria and demonstrate the need for this type of coordinated, flexible and holistic programming and collaborative provision of supports.

5.0 Evaluation Findings

The findings set out below reflect an accumulation of evaluation data that was collected from October 2008 to November 2009. After only a year of programming it is too early to assess the longer-term effectiveness of the initiative. However, the information that has been gathered does enable a discussion of progress that is being made to engage, stabilize and reconnect at-risk youth to the normative supports that they need to succeed.

5.1 Progress towards Outputs

This section examines the progress towards the initiative's shorter-term results⁸ as set out in the change framework. The quantitative data related to each result statement was generated by a review of intake forms, client files and the participant tracking table that is maintained by R.A.D.A.R.'s project manager. This data is augmented by an analysis of qualitative information drawn from the following: discussions with R.A.D.A.R.

⁸ There is a range of evaluation terminology and so for the sake of clarity in this evaluation: *outputs* describe progress or changes that are an immediate result of supports provided or participation in activities. *Outcomes* are longer term, more sustainable change that results from programming and access to supports and that strengthen an individual's resilience and capacity to be successful over time.

staff; the teachers' monthly reports; reports from R.A.D.A.R.'s recreation and transition staff; and a survey⁹ completed by regularly attending youth.

Output 1: Youth is engaged and connected to resources

Between October 2008 and November 2009 a total of 50 youth were referred to R.A.D.A.R. Referral sources included the two school boards (21 referrals), the youth shelters (13 referrals), Child and Family Services Authority (8 referrals), R.A.D.A.R. Support Team (3 referrals), Alberta Health Services (1 referral) and for two youth the referral source is unknown.

Of these referrals, 13 youth were connected to other supports or did not choose to engage with R.A.D.A.R. support. Three were connected back to community schools; one went to Louise Dean School; and two were supported to gain access to group homes with possible foster home placements and are attending community schools. For those that did not engage, one no longer lives in Calgary; one was at CYOC at referral and has since turned sixteen; and the current whereabouts of five are unknown. Effective tracking of these youth was difficult because of staff shortages between October 2008 and June 2009. More rigorous tracking processes have been in effect since the educational programming recommenced in September 2009.

Three of the 50 youth referred have been connected to R.A.D.A.R.'s outreach programming but not to the educational component. In these cases, R.A.D.A.R.'s support team (recreation and transition workers) is working to maintain and strengthen the youths' connection to their community school or other appropriate school placements. In all cases these youth are facing challenges (problems at school, homelessness, conflict at home and/or high-risk behaviour) and are in need of flexible support to prevent further entrenchment in street life.

Six youth are new referrals who are currently being triaged by the Operational Committee; acceptance into R.A.D.A.R. or referral to other appropriate supports is pending.

Twenty-eight of the 50 referrals participated in R.A.D.A.R.'s educational programming. However, the level and consistency of their engagement varied widely.

⁹ The Youth Satisfaction Survey was completed by 11 of the participating youth. Seven completed the survey in June 2009 and the other four in November 2009.

Table 5. Type of Engagement or Referral

October 2008 – November 20, 2009	#
Participated in Educational & Support Programming	28
Support Programming only	3
New referrals – currently being triaged	6
Referred to other supports	6
Moved from Calgary	1
CYOC never attended R.A.D.A.R.	1
Chose not engage and whereabouts unknown	5
Total Referred to R.A.D.A.R. Operational Committee	50

Analysis

The information collected to date suggests that R.A.D.A.R. is making good progress in terms of engaging youth and connecting them to appropriate resources. The number of referrals and range of referral sources indicates that R.A.D.A.R. is known across youth serving systems and that the established referral pathways are effective. The loss of the Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) representative from the Operational Committee in July meant fewer referrals from this source in September and October of 2009. It is expected that a replacement in December 2009 will help to re-engage this important partner.

Although continuous tracking of youth who choose not to engage with R.A.D.A.R. programming is beyond the capacity of the team, it will be important for the Operational Committee to periodically revisit youth who are eligible for support in order to: 1) keep them “on the R.A.D.A.R.” and 2) make R.A.D.A.R. available to them if and when they are ready to engage.

Output 2: Youth is attending and progressing with R.A.D.A.R. educational programming

There are currently eight youth participating in R.A.D.A.R.’s educational programming on a regular basis. Two of these youth began attending in the spring of 2009 and then returned when programming recommenced in September 2009. The other six are new students this year; two started in September, one in October and three in November. Half of the students were in attendance more than 80% of the time (Table 5). This means they showed up at the Hangar and took part in programming more than 16 out of 20 possible days in any given month. For the youth who were in attendance less than half the time it is important to remember that this is still a significant improvement from their previous school placements where attendance rates were well below 50% for all of the R.A.D.A.R. youth.

Table 6. Attendance in educational program (September – November 2009)

Level of attendance	# of youth in Sept 09	%	# of youth in Oct 09	%	# of youth in Nov 09	%
More than 80% of the time	2	50	2	50	4	50
Between 50 – 79% of the time	1	25	1	25	4	50
Between 25 – 49% of the time	1	25	1	25	0	0
Less than 24% of the time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Youth in Program	4	100	4	100	8	100

Only four of the eight youth currently taking part in the educational programming have been with R.A.D.A.R. long enough to assess their level of engagement. For these four, the teacher's reports suggest that three are engaging and making progress in the classroom. Two are attending regularly and are building relationships with the teachers and other staff. The third youth is attending less than half the time but when in attendance is focused and is connecting with staff. The fourth youth is struggling to connect with staff and has significant academic challenges.

Between October 2008 and June 2009, there were twenty youth who took part in R.A.D.A.R.'s educational programming. Attendance records are less accurate but we know that eight of these youth were in attendance more than 50% of the time (10/20 possible school days); one youth was present less regularly (6 or 7/20 possible days); and the remaining 11 attended less than five days a month or very sporadically. For example, attending 5/5 days one week and then not showing up for 2 weeks and then coming back for 3/5 days.

Table 7. Average levels of attendance (October 2008 – June 2009)

Level of attendance	# of youth	%
More than 50% of the time	8	40%
Between 25 – 49% of the time	1	5%
Less than 24% of the time	11	55%
Total Youth Participating	20	100.0%

For the eight youth who took part in the programming on a regular basis (more than 10/20 days) last year, the teacher's reports suggest that their level of engagement with the teachers and staff was relatively good. All of these youth experienced challenges in their personal lives and some would use R.A.D.A.R. as a place to debrief, regroup and work out healthier strategies to manage their stress and resolve issues.

Eleven youth completed a survey to assess their level of satisfaction with R.A.D.A.R. education programming. Seven youth completed the survey in June 2008 and four completed it in November 2009. All either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe with and cared for by R.A.D.A.R. staff. They felt supported in their learning and recognized for their achievements. When asked to describe the most significant change

in their lives since being part of the R.A.D.A.R. initiative, participants made the following comments:

"Well, I didn't go to school before and now I do."

"I started to come to school all the time, barely missing any days."

"My behaviour, my attitude and the way I look at things now has helped me get into a stable home and helped bring my grades up."

"I am learning to come to school everyday."

Analysis

Although there are not standardized measures of success for programs that re-connect at-risk youth, the progress being made by participating youth suggests that R.A.D.A.R. is meeting reasonable expectations in terms of re-engaging these youth at "school". Knowing the extent of their previous disengagement from school, the fact that 17 of the 28 youth were in attendance more than half the time suggests that the educational programming and staff are valued by the youth. The survey responses provide further evidence that youth feel supported and safe, and are learning how to manage in a classroom setting.

Tracking consistency of attendance and levels of engagement among participating youth over this school year (2009/10) will give us a better sense of what is working and what isn't in terms of the educational programming. It will be important for the Operational Committee to work with the teaching staff to develop specific strategies to mitigate unintended attrition from the program. They will need to explore ways to strengthen the youth's connection to the program so that when things get difficult in other areas of their lives they continue to come to the Hangar for support and assistance.

Output 3: Youth is engaging in pro-social recreation and with community

The absence of the Recreation Connector as part of the R.A.D.A.R. team prior to June 2009 meant that opportunities to engage in recreational activities within the community were limited for the first eight months of programming. Between October and June, workers attached to the SCRIPT program provided support to R.A.D.A.R. youth when and where they were able. These supports included: employment searching, transportation to appointments (probation, doctors and social workers), informal dialogue about relationships, meeting basic needs (buying shoes, clothes, food bank, etc., when youth were in need), accessing shelters, planning and accessing recreational activities, and signing up for summer camps. Accurate data related to the number of youth who utilized these supports and the affect of the supports was not available from October 2008 to June 2009.

At the end of June, the Recreation Connector organized summer activities for R.A.D.A.R. youth as well as other youth staying at the shelters. A total of 35 youth took part in this programming; eight of these youth had previously been involved with R.A.D.A.R.; four had no previous involvement but have since been formally referred and are now receiving on-going supports; five participated in recreational programming in the summer and not beyond; and, the remaining 18 were over 16 years of age and not eligible for additional support from R.A.D.A.R.

In September 2009, scheduled recreation opportunities were organized and offered to R.A.D.A.R. youth on Tuesday evenings, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays after school. A total of nine youth participated in this programming in September and eleven youth participated in October.

Reports prepared by the Recreation Connector state that for the transitioned youth this contact helped to maintain familiar support as they worked to fit into their new school placements. For youth not taking part in the educational program, the connection with R.A.D.A.R. staff either began to build trust and readiness to engage or it helped them to re-engage/stay engaged at their community school.

Analysis

The flexible and informal nature of the recreation provides youth with meaningful critical hours activities, maintains on-going support for transitioned youth and provides opportunities to connect with youth who are not yet ready to fully engage with R.A.D.A.R. These supports are proving to be an important part of R.A.D.A.R.'s comprehensive service delivery model even though it is not yet possible to determine their longer-term affect on the youth. Developing strategies to increase the levels and consistency of participation will need to be explored by the R.A.D.A.R. team in the coming months. The evaluator will also develop more effective tools to measure levels and affect of participation in recreational programming.

Considering that R.A.D.A.R.'s priority is to connect youth to *existing* supports rather than create duplicate supports, more could be done to encourage and support youth to take part in community-based recreational opportunities. Although some ad hoc efforts have been made, these are not well documented. The staff team should identify other community-based opportunities in terms of sports, theatre and mentoring that might be appropriate for the R.A.D.A.R. youth.

Output 4: Youth is reconnecting with family or positive adult

Of the eight youth who were consistently active in R.A.D.A.R.'s programming between October 2008 and June 2009, five showed improvements in connecting with family and non-professional adults. In four of these cases, this meant renewed communication and interaction with parents and for one youth it meant settling in with a foster family and reconnecting with a biological brother.

Six of the eight have established more stable living arrangements. Three are living at home consistently; one was successfully placed in a group home; one was successfully placed with a foster family; and one youth was living at a youth shelter over the summer but is now living in a group home.

For youth participating in R.A.D.A.R. since September 2009, three have moved from youth shelters or chaotic homes to more stable accommodation; one to live with a step-parent, the other into a foster home and the third into a group home. Efforts are being made to support two others to access and retain placements in a group home. The remaining three are currently living in stable environments. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there are additional youth who were supported by R.A.D.A.R. staff and the Operational Committee to access appropriate housing, however reliable information related to the result of these supports was not documented.

Table 7 below sets out the difference in living situations for the 16 youth who consistently engaged with R.A.D.A.R. supports and programming.

Table 8. Change in Living Situation for Active Youth

Living Situation	At Referral		As of November 30/09	
	#	%	#	%
Youth Shelter	6	38	0	0
CYOC	0	0	0	0
Group Home	3	19	4	25
Foster Home	0	0	3	19
Parent/Guardian	5	31	8	50
Couch surfing/friends/Unknown	2	12	1	6
Total	16	100.0	16	100.0

Analysis

For youth who were consistently engaged there is evidence that R.A.D.A.R. is effectively supporting these youth to access and maintain stable housing and a trend towards improved relations with family and/or non-professional adults. These supports involve working with various systems to find appropriate group or foster home placements as well as supporting youth to build skills to manage their behaviour so that they can stay in these homes. When appropriate, it also involves enabling youth to reconnect with parents, siblings and legal guardians.

Helping youth to find and maintain a stable living environment is particularly important when we consider the strong correlation between stable homes and school attendance. All of the youth who are currently present in the R.A.D.A.R. classroom more than 50% of the time have safe and stable places to live. These youth are living with parents, foster

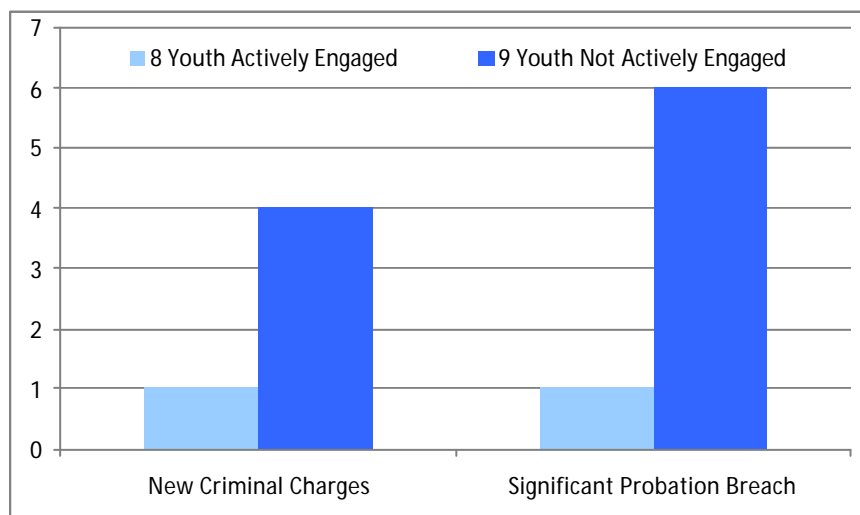
parents or group home staff that are committed to helping them figure out how to get to the Hangar each day. The youth who live in chaotic, unsupervised or temporary environments (couch-surfing, friends or with parents who are unable to provide adequate supervision) have much more inconsistent attendance in the R.A.D.A.R. classroom. Thus, putting greater emphasis on stable housing as a strategy to help these youth reconnect to school is worth considering over the next year.

Output 5: Youth is making healthier choices and building social skills

Detailed information about maintaining more positive peer relations and changes in substance use is not yet available for youth who are currently active in R.A.D.A.R. programming. Although there is anecdotal evidence of changes in some of the youth's files, the length of their participation in programming is not yet sufficient to attribute any change to R.A.D.A.R.'s efforts. Furthermore, there has not been adequate time to build the relationships of trust with staff that would enable youth to disclose reliable information about their peer relationships or their substance use.

For youth who took part in R.A.D.A.R. programming last year, the only objective measure of "making healthier choices" that is currently available is information regarding probation and criminal involvement since participation in R.A.D.A.R. Data from youth probation (Table 8) indicates that of the youth who were actively engaged with R.A.D.A.R. and who have had previous criminal involvement (8 youth) one has new charges and one has had one breach¹⁰ of their probation order. By contrast, for those youth who were referred but did not effectively engage and who have previously engaged in criminal activity (9 youth), four youth have new charges and six youth have had breaches.

Table 9. Criminal Charges & Probation Breaches since involvement in R.A.D.A.R.



¹⁰ A breach is a charge for wilfully failing to comply ("breach") with a court order.

Analysis

Although we know that R.A.D.A.R. programming is only one of a number of factors that might contribute to reduced criminal activity it is reasonable to conclude that the combination of supports provided to youth who actively engage with R.A.D.A.R. is contributing to an overall reduction in their criminal activity. Tracking this information over the three next three years will be an important indicator of participating youth's longer-term success.

5.2 Progress towards Outcomes

The following section examines the medium term results related to the youth who have been transitioned from R.A.D.A.R. to community schools. Data related to these outcomes was drawn from R.A.D.A.R.'s Transition Worker reports, school board attendance records, reports from Youth Probation and discussions with the R.A.D.A.R. project manager.

Outcome 1: Youth is returned to community school setting

There were six youth who were active in R.A.D.A.R. programming in the 2008-2009 year who were transitioned back to a community school in September 2009. Attendance records are available for these youth to the end of November and show that four of these youth are attending school more than 80% of the time and the other two are attending 40-50% of the time. R.A.D.A.R. is providing additional support to the two youth with lower attendance levels. One has been connected with the CBE's Student Response Team and has been placed at Discovering Choices¹¹. A transition worker is trying to connect with the other youth to explore ways to increase her attendance. As part of the ongoing evaluation, the transitioned youth will be tracked for three years to assess the degree to which their reconnection with school is sustainable.

Outcome 2: Youth lives in a stable environment

All six youth who were transitioned in September 2009 have maintained stable living arrangements. Two live in foster homes, three are living with a parent, and one is in a group home. Follow up reports from the transition workers are available for five¹² of the transitioned youth. These reports indicate that the three who are in group or foster homes are successfully maintaining these placements and the two who are living with a parent have sufficient support and stability. The transition workers will continue to provide as-needed support to these youth over the next 12-18 months.

¹¹ Discovering Choices is a Calgary Board of Education High School outreach program. It offers courses based on Alberta Education high school curriculum and work experience opportunities.

¹² Transition workers were only able to connect with 5 of the 6 transitioned youth between September and November 2009.

Outcome 3: Youth continue to make healthy and positive choices

As stated earlier, transition workers were able to connect with five of the six transitioned youth during this reporting period. Anecdotal evidence from these reports suggests that three of these youth are creating and beginning to maintain positive relationships with peers and non-professional adults. None of the youth is exhibiting issues with substance abuse. One youth is active in community and school-based sports and two continue to participate in R.A.D.A.R.'s recreational programming.

Three of the six transitioned youth had previous criminal involvement. None of these youth has had new charges or significant probation breaches since they transitioned back to community schools.

Analysis of Outcome Data for Transitioned Youth

Although the transitioned youth have only been active in community schools for three months, the data set out above suggests that most are adjusting well to their placements. Considering previous levels of disengagement¹³, even those with lower attendance rates are attending much more regularly than before their participation in R.A.D.A.R. All of the youth have maintained stable living arrangements and none have breached probation or been charged with new offences. Considering the history of these youth and the multiple risk factors with which they present, it is very unlikely that any of the transitioned youth would have done so without the supports provided by R.A.D.A.R. The following quote from one of these youth sums up in his own words the short-term effect that R.A.D.A.R. has had in his life.

"My life is going really good. I'm living in a group home and everything, going to school everyday. It's pretty good. It's cool that Courtney (transition worker) keeps track of what I am doing and stuff... Without R.A.D.A.R. I think I would still be doing the stuff I was doing before... stealing cars, doing drugs and not going to school... I think I was ready to make some changes but there was no way I could have gone straight into a community Junior High... R.A.D.A.R. is a good school, more supportive and they actually talk to you, they don't assume stuff." (Transitioned youth, November 18, 2009).

5.3 Organizational and Systems Level Change

The final two outcomes relate to collaboration and increased capacity among youth serving systems to engage and serve at-risk youth. Information about progress towards these outcomes is drawn predominantly from an analysis of the developmental evaluator's findings through participation on and interviews with R.A.D.A.R.'s Executive and Operational Committees.

¹³ For these 6 youth, the shortest period of disengagement was 7 months, the longest was 3 years.

Outcome 4: Increased collaboration among agencies serving at-risk youth

Agency collaboration is at the heart of R.A.D.A.R.'s design. The Executive and Operational Committees are composed of representatives from seven different youth serving organizations. The Operational Committee meets every two weeks to complete triage for newly referred youth and review the status of participating youth. Rates of attendance among members, and their capacity to combine their expertise and work around organizational barriers to more effectively serve the youth, indicate a high level of commitment to the collaborative process.

Enhanced inter-systems collaboration is most evident in the collaboration among the two school boards and the case-conferencing and joint problem solving that takes place within the Operational Committee. Furthermore the positive relationships that have been developed at the Executive level work to provide a head-start for other collaborative initiatives to support at-risk youth.

"Teachers from both boards working together – never done before – value tapping into both populations...having the two systems at the executive, operational and classroom level is good – the closer these systems work together, the better for those of us who are trying to effect change within each system" (R.A.D.A.R. Committee Member, October 2009).

Outcome 5: Increased capacity among youth serving systems to identify and engage at-risk youth

Although it is still too early to expect any kind of change at a systems level there are some indications that R.A.D.A.R. is supporting increased learning across systems and some shifts in practice.

Committee members described greater awareness of resources available in each system: *"We're more aware now that there are options for those kids. It opens more doors. Looking at other ways of supporting kids in the city without trying to utilize resources in a way that duplicates" (Committee Member, October 2009).*

Members also referred to the demystification of systems and a greater understanding of the resources available in each system. For example, there was little understanding about school suspensions. Shelter and health care partners were under the impression that a student could be expelled from school permanently. Yet, in fact, a student can only be suspended from a particular school and the school board is responsible to find a placement elsewhere. This was useful knowledge because youth under the age of 16 were telling shelter staff they had been "kicked out of the system" and shelter staff, believing this to be the case, were not trying to reconnect them academically.

In terms of changing practice, R.A.D.A.R. staff and teachers are trained in the effects of complex trauma on learning using the ARC¹⁴ model. The CBE is now exploring trauma influenced practice and how this training might be incorporated into its system-wide professional development.

The CBE is also beginning to talk about homeless youth and school. Young people without an address have previously been unable to go to school, they fall through the education system cracks. Dialogue across the R.A.D.A.R. committees is changing this as both systems are beginning to make an effort to serve these youth.

"...as partially a result of R.A.D.A.R., what I've noticed is when I started there was certainly no written policy and for sure no precedent around kids in shelter and where they belong in school and who had to take them and who's responsible for them. That just was not there. So I've certainly seen shifts – more around our own working as a team around how to deal with those things...We haven't moved to policy yet – may never, might, I don't know - but kids are in no man's land when they're at a shelter, so we've used some creative ways around having them have an address in terms of where they go to school. So at least when I came, that conversation hadn't started – because we didn't know, we didn't have a relationship with shelters. Certainly in terms of R.A.D.A.R. [we're casting] a wider net which creates challenges for our system for sure. They're hard kids, very complex kids. Challenges for other systems as well – Child Welfare...So it's like, you're afraid to scratch sometimes. So we've started scratching. And it's getting itchier!" (Executive Committee Member, October 2009)

6.0 Developmental Findings¹⁵

The developmental component of the evaluation is focused on learning and on-going improvements to the initiative. The developmental evaluator works with R.A.D.A.R.'s committees to problem solve throughout implementation while at the same time capturing lessons that emerge about the program, the collaborative process and systems level change.

Developmental and process oriented information was formally collected twice¹⁶ during the pilot phase through interviews with committee members and staff. This information

¹⁴ ARC (Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency) is a framework for intervention with youth and families who have experienced multiple and/or prolonged traumatic stress. Interventions focus on building secure attachments, enhancing self regulatory capabilities, and increasing competencies across multiple domains.

¹⁵ The information in this section of the report is based on work completed by Elizabeth Dozois as R.A.D.A.R.'s developmental evaluator. I would like to thank her for her help in synthesizing the information and her support in developing the recommendations set out in Section 8.0 below.

¹⁶ Interviews were conducted in November 2008 (10 interviews) and October 2009 (19 interviews).

was synthesized and then presented back to the committees through group processing workshops that make explicit emergent issues and challenges, and that provide a structured opportunity for joint problem solving. The following sections of the report describe learnings about the program, the collaboration and systems level change.

6.1 Lessons at the Program Level

Balancing the Education and Community/Recreation Components

During the pilot phase the education component was prominent¹⁷ and, as a result, many youth who were not yet ready to engage at “school” did not stay connected with R.A.D.A.R. For example, twelve of the youth who were referred to the initiative in 2008/2009 came to the Hangar but did not engage or consistently participate. The reasons for this lack of engagement vary depending on the particular youth but it was evident that additional strategies are needed to connect with these youth. The addition of the recreation and transition workers to the R.A.D.A.R. team has significantly increased the capacity of the initiative to meet youth in the community, work with them one-on-one to build trust and stability, and, when appropriate, bring them into the education setting at the Hangar.

Over the next year, R.A.D.A.R. committees will work to more fully develop this ‘support’ or ‘outreach’ as a discrete component. It may have different criteria for engagement that meet the need for increased flexibility to serve these youth. The committees will also need to determine how the education and outreach components work together to support youth in the R.A.D.A.R. classroom as well as those youth who are not yet ready for school or who are still connected to a community school but are in need of additional support.

Mental Health Supports

The vast majority of youth accessing R.A.D.A.R.’s supports present with mental health and/or addiction issues. There is a representative from Adolescent Mental Health on the Operational Committee who supports the triage process and provides mental health advice and support to the R.A.D.A.R staff team. In November, an addictions counsellor from AHS also began to do weekly group sessions in the classroom and some one-on-one with active youth. However, there may also be the need for a therapist to consistently work alongside the classroom and outreach staff.

“...mental health, we need that kind of support in the building [the Hangar]. Not every day, but in the building. We have someone on ops [Operational Committee] who can offer strategies, but we need more than that. Some of these kids need true clinical support” (Executive Committee Member, October 2009).

¹⁷ As noted early this prominence was the result of R.A.D.A.R. being without a full composite of staff.

Revisiting the Criteria and Parameters

Criteria for participation based on research related to homeless youth and gaps in service were established in October 2008. As the initiative evolves and things change in the broader context it will be important to revisit this criteria to be sure R.A.D.A.R. continues to serve youth in need.

"[We need to] not get really stuck or narrow minded. We said this is an age group we've targeted. We also said if we find out that's not right, we should be able to be responsive to that. I hope that in meeting funders expectations, we don't lose innovation" (Executive Committee Member, October 2009).

The Executive Committee will assess the referral pathways and revisit age, spectrum of homelessness and levels of school disengagement over the coming year. They will also explore appropriate levels of flexibility in applying these criteria to ensure R.A.D.A.R. is serving a sufficient number of youth.

In addition to admission criteria, parameters and processes need to be established for discharge and transition. Thus far, transitions have been determined on a case by case basis. In the future, it will be important to determine processes for various kinds of discharge and transitions to ensure sound decision-making and appropriate follow-up and support.

Understanding Disengagement

As stated above, there were a number of youth who took part in R.A.D.A.R. programming, sometimes consistently, sometimes sporadically and then not at all. Taking the time to understand this disengagement – why these kids come and then stop coming – will be important as the initiative moves forward. Working with the developmental evaluator, staff and the operational committee will need to focus more on learning who this model works for, who it doesn't and why.

Data Collection Processes

Although data collection and management systems have improved, the program evaluator needs to continue to work with R.A.D.A.R. staff and teachers to ensure we have the right tools and mechanisms to enable program level learning and to demonstrate effectiveness. Methods to more reliably measure change in participating youth in terms of peer relations, non-professional attachment, substance use and mental health need to be developed and consistently applied over this next school year (2009/2010).

6.2 Lessons from the Collaborative Process

Maintaining Engagement among the Partners

Keeping all members of the Executive Committee equally engaged in planning, decision-making and oversight is a challenge. Attendance at Executive Committee meetings has been uneven. (Operational Committee meetings seem to be attended fairly consistently). This is somewhat predictable as the heavy demands associated with start-up have lessened and the program has become operationalized. Finding ways to keep people at the table will be important especially as the initiative hopes to have a longer-term impact on youth serving systems.

Include CBE and CSSD Principals in the Collaborative

The R.A.D.A.R. teachers and behaviour support worker are accountable to their CBE and CSSD principals. Yet, these principals have not been included as members of the Operational Committee or as part of RADAR staff meetings. As key decision makers these principals need be part of the initiative's evolving vision and program development.

The Missing Partner: Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA)

Child and Family Services has not had representation on the Operational Committee since July and has never been represented on the Executive Committee¹⁸. Considering that 74% of youth referred to R.A.D.A.R. have current child welfare involvement and 36% are permanent guardians of the state, this is a significant omission in the collaboration. At the operational level, it is felt that this absence has affected the number of referrals and inhibits the capacity of the Operational Committee and staff to effectively find and secure stable residential placements for the R.A.D.A.R. youth. At the Executive level, representation by CFSA is likely important to any effort towards sustainable reform of youth serving systems.

Strengthening Communication across the Committees

Communication across the committees and between the committees and the staff has been relatively good during the pilot period. However, there is a desire to bring all committees and staff together quarterly to assess progress, discuss challenges and joint problem solve. There has also been some lack of clarity and overlap in committee roles and there needs be more clearly defined parameters. Some committee members feel the Executive is too focused on program development and needs to focus more on resolving broader systems issues. At the same time, executive members want to retain a good understanding of what is going on in terms of program delivery. Creating greater clarity about roles and effectively bridging the gap between committees will be important to the continued success of the collaboration.

¹⁸ As of December 9th CFSA has re-assigned a staff representative to the operational Committee.

6.3 Lessons at the Systems Level

R.A.D.A.R.'s original vision and guiding principles emphasized the need for substantive change at the systems level to effectively serve these seriously disconnected youth. There are concerns at all levels that, without explicit attention to systems level outcomes, R.A.D.A.R. will be limited to a programmatic response.

"I'm worried that we'll lose the initial vision around changing how the school system works, changing how Child Welfare works with kids. Can we dream bigger for these kids?" (Executive Committee Member, October 2009).

"We're running a good program, but we're missing the systems piece. And that means changing the work we're doing now in favour of doing other work" (Executive Committee Member, October 2009).

7.0 Summary Conclusions

The findings from the program evaluation indicate that the combination of R.A.D.A.R. programming and supports is effective to engage, stabilize and reconnect at-risk youth to community schools and stable residential settings. During its first year of operation, working with limited staff and a range of partners, the initiative received referrals for 50 youth. Of these, a total of 16 participated actively (in attendance more than 50% of the time) in the educational programming, six were connected to other supports and six are new referrals.

Of the remaining youth, there were a number who engaged sporadically and then disengaged. Keeping track of these youth with limited staff was very difficult last year however, moving forward, it will be important to understand why some youth engage and others don't, and to build strategies to more effectively connect with those who don't. The addition of a recreation worker and two transition workers has already begun to strengthen the 'outreach' community component of the initiative and is expected to increase R.A.D.A.R.'s capacity to support youth not yet ready or inappropriate for the classroom.

Perhaps most significantly R.A.D.A.R. supported six youth, all of whom were seriously disengaged from school, to successfully transition back to community school programs. Four of these youth are attending classes more than 80% of the time, all have maintained safe and stable places to live, and none have been criminally charged or breached probation. Considering the history of these youth and the multiple risk factors with which they present, it is unlikely that these seven youth would be experiencing these positive changes without the supports provided by R.A.D.A.R.

Information to strengthen program delivery and the collaborative process is being captured and there are good indications that this information will be used by the committees and staff to support efforts for continuous improvement. R.A.D.A.R.'s primary challenge at the program level will be to maintain sufficient engagement (in both quantity and duration of supports) with participating youth to make a positive difference in their lives. The challenge for the collaboration is ensuring the right partners come to and stay at the table at the same time that the Executive Committee stays focused on affecting systems level change.

R.A.D.A.R. is now fully operational, has a complete team of staff and is fully funded for three years by the Safe Communities Innovation Fund, the City of Calgary, the CBE, the CSSD and an anonymous funder. Overall, R.A.D.A.R. has achieved many accomplishments in its first year, and there is every indication that the initiative will demonstrate even greater success during this next school year and beyond.

8.0 Recommendations Moving Forward

8.1 Program Level Recommendations

1. The Operational Committee needs to work with R.A.D.A.R. staff and teachers to more fully understand disengagement – why youth come to the program and then suddenly stop coming. It will be important to understand this attrition and develop specific strategies to strengthen the youth's connection to the program so that when things get difficult in other areas of their lives, they continue to come to Hangar for support and assistance. We need to more clearly understand who this model works for, who it doesn't and why.
2. Considering that R.A.D.A.R.'s priority is to connect youth to *existing* supports rather than create duplicate supports, more needs to be done to encourage and support youth to take part in community-based recreational opportunities. Although some ad hoc efforts have been made, these are not well documented. The staff team should identify other community based-opportunities (sports, theatre, volunteering and mentoring) that might be appropriate for the R.A.D.A.R. youth.
3. As we know from this evaluation, and many other studies, there is a strong correlation between stable homes and school attendance. As such, R.A.D.A.R. could increase efforts at both program and system levels to support youth to find and maintain stable residential placements. This may include further engagement with the child welfare system to ensure that youth who are permanent guardians are more effectively served by public supports.

4. More fully develop 'support' or 'outreach' as a discrete component with potentially different criteria and supports. The committees will also need to determine how the education and outreach components work together to support youth in the R.A.D.A.R. classroom, as well as those youth who are not yet ready for school or who are still connected to a community school but in need of additional support.
5. Include on-site access to therapeutic and counselling support. Options for the provision of this counselling support should be explored with Alberta Health Services Adolescent Mental Health.
6. As the initiative evolves and things change in the broader context, R.A.D.A.R. will need to periodically revisit its admission criteria to ensure that the initiative continues to serve youth in need.
7. Establish clear criteria and processes for discharge and transition.
8. Develop and consistently apply evaluation tools and methods to more reliably measure change in participating youth in terms of peer relations, non-professional attachment, substance use and mental health.

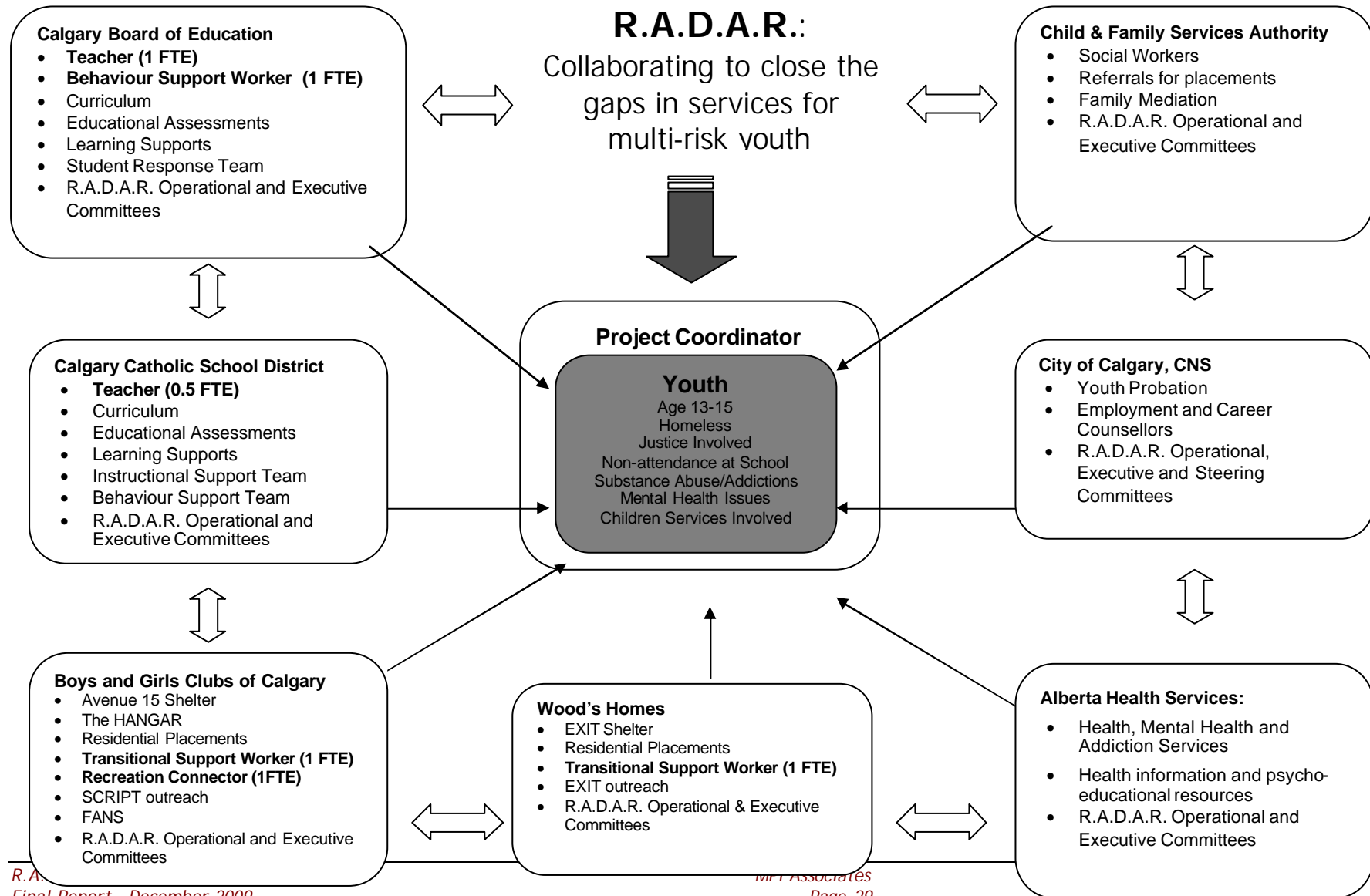
8.2 Recommendations for the Collaboration

9. Shift the focus of the Executive from program development to strategic gaps analysis and systems change. This may help to keep the level of engagement high as members will be taking on new challenges and working at a level that is appropriate given each of their positions within their respective organizations.
10. Ensure that the Child and Family Services Authority is consistently represented on the Executive and Operational Committees. This partner is important as a referral source, in terms of resolving residential placement issues and, over the longer term, to any efforts to reform and strengthen Alberta's child welfare system.
11. Bring all committees and staff together more regularly (perhaps quarterly) to assess progress, discuss challenges and joint problem solve.
12. Develop more clearly defined roles and parameters for the front-line staff and develop processes to support clear communication between the school principals and the R.A.D.A.R. collaborative.

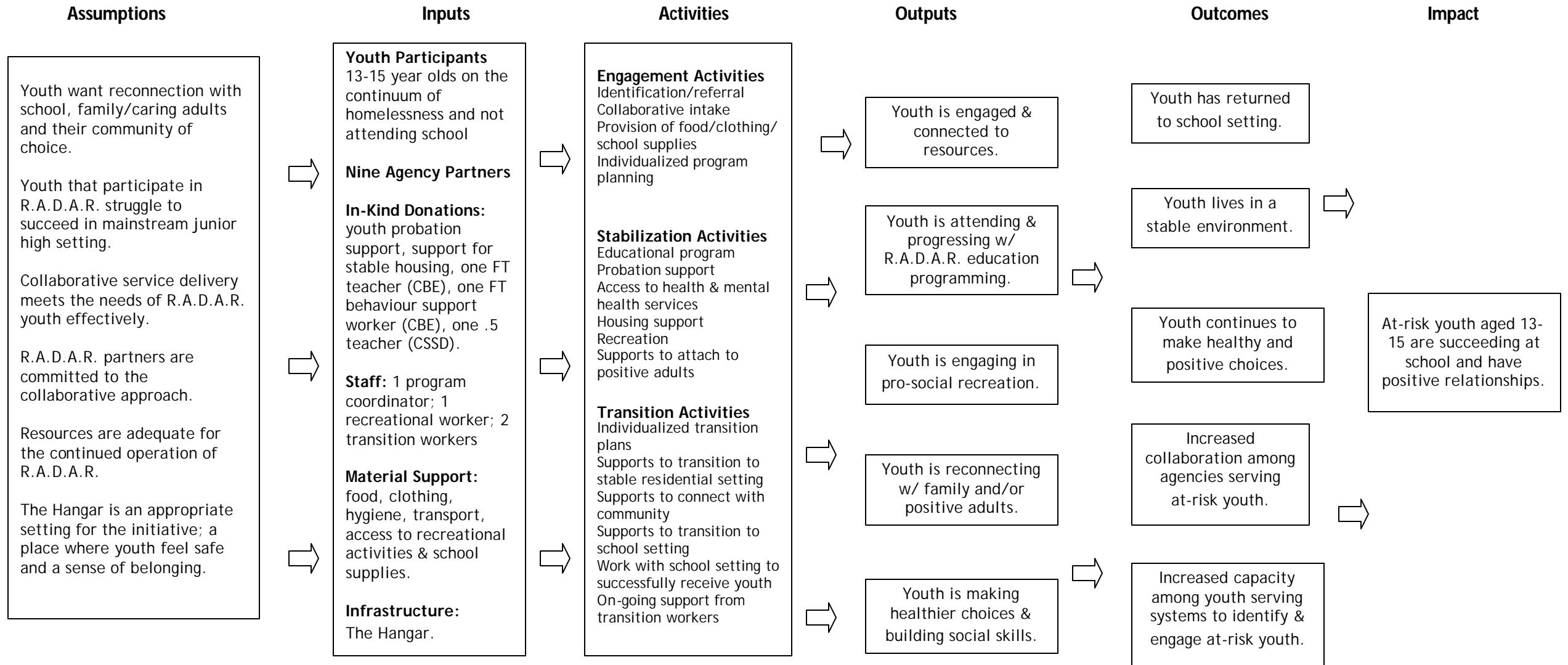
8.3 Recommendations for Systems Level Change

13. The Executive Committee needs to be more focused on working to resolve systems level issues that contribute to the vulnerability of these youth and the systems' inability to effectively serve them. Invest time in identifying and prioritizing systems-level outcomes. Develop strategies for moving towards them. (Note: some systems-level outcomes were identified through the interviews conducted as part of the Developmental Evaluation. These might serve as a starting point).

Appendix A: Service delivery model



Appendix B: R.A.D.A.R. Program Level Change Framework



Appendix C: Data Collection & Monitoring Plan

Expected Results	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Timing	Responsibility
Youth is engaged & connected to resources.	Number of youth referred to R.A.D.A.R.	Referral/Intake form	Referral	Coordinator
	Number of youth connected to other support services	Referral process	Referral	Coordinator
	Type of services accessed			
	Number of youth that complete intake process	Project Coordinator report	Intake	Coordinator
Youth is attending & progressing w/ academic programming.	Attendance at the Hangar	Teacher reports Participant Data Chart	On-going	Coordinator
	Level of engagement	Teacher reports/interviews	6 months	Teachers
Youth is engaging in pro-social recreation & with community.	Level of engagement in R.A.D.A.R. recreational activities	Interviews (family &/or support Recreational worker Youth Justice	6 months	Recreational worker Evaluator
	Participating in mentoring or other community based programs			
	Meeting Probation requirements/not re-offending			
Youth is reconnecting w/ family or positive adult.	Enhanced relationship with family and/or non-professional adult	Interviews (family &/or support Transition workers Participant Data Chart	6 months	Transition workers Evaluator Coordinator
	Number of youth returned home to live w/ family or kinship			
	Number of youth with stable living situation (group/foster home)			
Youth is making healthier choices & building social skills.	Presence of positive peer relationships	Interview (youth)	6 months	Transition workers Evaluator
	Reduction in drug/alcohol use	Interviews (family &/or support) Transition workers		
Youth is returned to school setting.	Number of youth in school 6 months post R.A.D.A.R..	CBE/CSSD Transition worker follow- up	Follow-up post R.A.D.A.R.: 6/12 months	Transition workers Evaluator
	Frequency of school attendance among these youth			
	School performance			
Youth lives in a stable environment.	Number of youth living with family or in stable group home post-R.A.D.A.R.	Coordinator follow- up	Follow-up post R.A.D.A.R.: 6/12 months	Transition workers Evaluator
Youth maintains good health & positive relationships.	Number of youth who are addiction free post R.A.D.A.R.	Follow-up interviews	Follow-up post R.A.D.A.R.: 6/ 12 months	Transition workers Evaluator
	Positive peer relationships post R.A.D.A.R.			
	Presence of non-professional attachments			
	Levels of participation in the community (recreation, mentoring, employment, volunteering)			

Appendix D: R.A.D.A.R. Youth Satisfaction Survey

Name of Youth: _____ Date: _____

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below:

4 = Strongly Agree
 3 = Agree
 2 = Disagree
 1 = Strongly Disagree
 NA = Not Applicable

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
1) You felt safe with us.	4	3	2	1	NA
2) You felt cared for with us.	4	3	2	1	NA
3) We made efforts to support and improve relations between you and your family.	4	3	2	1	NA
4) We recognized your achievements and successes.	4	3	2	1	NA
5) We helped you feel more hopeful about your future.	4	3	2	1	NA
6) We helped you learn life skills to make healthier choices for yourself.	4	3	2	1	NA
7) We supported your learning and helped you to feel prepared to return to mainstream schooling.	4	3	2	1	NA
8) We provided opportunities for you to participate in positive recreation and community activities.	4	3	2	1	NA
9) We supported you to find stable living conditions.	4	3	2	1	NA
10) We provided you with basic needs (food, clothing, health etc.)	4	3	2	1	NA
11) We challenged you in a caring and positive way.	4	3	2	1	NA
12) We helped you find support for: (circle all that apply)	Addictions	Mental Health	Physical Health	NA	

13) Name one significant change that has happened in your life from being in the R.A.D.A.R. program:

Appendix E: Developmental Evaluation Interview Protocol

1. Thinking back over the past year, what do you think R.A.D.A.R.'s greatest successes have been?
2. What have been the biggest challenges?
 - What challenges or potential threats might be on the horizon? What do we need to be paying attention to most?
3. Last fall, when I conducted interviews, collaboration was identified as a key challenge and opportunity. How well do you think we're working together as a collaborative?
 - In what ways has the collaborative worked well? (Examples?)
 - In what ways could we work better as a collaborative?
 - What should we be working on in this area?
4. For R.A.D.A.R. to really be successful, it needs to have more than programmatic outcomes. We need to be impacting the systems that are failing these kids. Systems change takes time, of course – but...
 - Are you seeing any evidence of systems level impact at the end of our first year?
 - What kinds of systems-level changes do you think we should be working towards?
 - What would it take to get there?
5. (Referring to the Learning Framework) These are the key areas for learning and development that the group identified at this time last year.
 - What movement have you seen in these areas?
 - Have we grown in our understanding of these challenges and opportunities? (If so, how?)
 - Are these still the most important areas to be focusing on? If yes, why? If not, what would be a more important area to focus on?