PERCEIVED NEEDS AND SERVICE USE AMONG YOUTH OFFENDERS PREPARING FOR REENTRY TO RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study aims to increase understanding of the reentry experience for incarcerated youth, from a youth perspective. Youth have been the focus of many research projects; however, data have been typically collected from adults about youth, rather than from youth themselves. In recent years, youth voices have become increasingly valued as youth are considered to be able to reliably communicate their own experiences and perspectives (Schelbe, et al, 2015; MacNaughton & Smith, 2005).

Understanding the perceptions of incarcerated youth is important as research has shown that offender perceptions and expectations about returning home often correlate with actual reentry experiences. Upon returning to their homes and communities after months or years of detention, youth educational and employment outcomes are bleak. (Bullis &Yovanoff, 2002; Osgood, Foster & Courtney, 2010; Todis et al, 2001; Trulson et al, 2005).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do youth perceive their own needs?

2. How do YRTC staff perceptions of youth service needs compare with those of the youth themselves?

3. How accessible are rehabilitation services to Nebraska's youth?

TIMELINE

- Received approval to conduct the research project from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (conditional on receiving approval from DHHS) on December 8, 2015

- Received formal approval from DHHS on June 24, 2016

- Distributed surveys to staff at YRTC-Kearney and YRTC-Geneva on August 22, 2016

- Began youth interviews on March 13, 2017

RESEARCH QUESTION #1

How do youth perceive their own needs?

METHODOLOGY: CONSENT

- Youth are informed about the research study by their case managers when they are within 60 days of release.

- Parents/caregivers are mailed a consent form by a YRTC staff member .

- Case managers and youth review the consent form either over the phone or in person with a researcher.

- If the parent/caregiver has not returned the consent form by mail, verbal consent is secured over the phone.

- If all parties have given consent, the interview is scheduled.

METHODOLOGY: YOUTH INTERVIEWS

- Youth are interviewed when they are within 60 days of reentry.

- Interviews take 30-60 minutes and are conducted by 2 members of the research team in a private but visible location on the YRTC campuses.

- Open-ended and closed-ended questions ask about: demographic information; family relationships; physical health and mental health; expectations about reentry; past trauma; neighborhood and school characteristics; and current and planned service use.

- To date, 24 interviews have been completed with male subjects and 14 with female subjects.

Factors Related to Youths' Reentry Experiences

Areas of inquiry	Variables (examples)
Demographics	Age, gender, race, geographic location, sexual orientation
Individual well-being	Physical and mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, lifetime incidence of traumatic events, substance use and abuse
Family characteristics	Attachment, family structure, immigration status
Educational environment	Attendance, academic performance, engagement, type of school, extracurricular activities
Interpersonal relationships	Pro-social bonds, negative influences
Neighborhood conditions	Gang activity, exposure to drugs/alcohol, personal safety, graffiti, vacant/abandoned buildings
Desistance and future offending	Perceived level of concern
Services	Perceived needs, availability, and past, current and planned use

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

How do YRTC staff perceptions of youth service needs compare with those of the youth themselves?

METHODOLOGY

- Letters on UNK letterhead were placed in staff mailboxes at each YRTC. The letters contained an introduction to the research project, the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participating, the time commitments and procedures.

- Only staff who had direct contact with youth were recruited to the study.

- Surveys and envelopes were placed in staff mailboxes. Upon completing the survey, staff were asked to place the survey in the envelope and seal it. They then deposited the surveys in a lock box in the YRTC main office. By completing the survey, staff were consenting to participate in the study.

- Questions inquired about: concerns facing youth upon reentry; service needs, availability and usage; and respondent demographic information.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- Surveys were completed by 35 staff members at YRTC-Kearney and 41 staff members at YRTC-Geneva.

- Over half of the respondents (53%) had worked at YRTC for more than 6 years.

- 58% of the respondents were female, 42% male.

- Job titles included case manager (36%), teaching staff (19%), Officer of the Day (17%), counselors (13%), recreation staff (1%) and other (13%).

- 78% of respondents reported that they spend at least 20 hours per week in direct contact with the youth at YRTC.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Section 1 explored staff perceptions of concerns facing youth after release.

- Section 2 examined staff perceptions of youth service needs and probable use.

Top 10 Concerns Perceived by Staff

Issue or task	Percent
Drug/alcohol use	89.0
Staying out of trouble	86.5
Gang violence	83.7
Gang involvement	77.0
Having stable housing	76.7
Completing their education	74.3
Life at home	67.1
Supporting themselves financially	63.5
Finding or keeping a job	58.3
Feeling safe in their community	52.1

Percent of respondents who checked "4" (*somewhat of a concern*) or "5" (*a major concern*)

STAFF PERCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUTH

Mental Health Care	Percent (%) responding they "agree" or "strongly agree"	Percent (%) responding "neutral"	Percent (%) responding they "disagree" or "strongly disagree"	Total (%)
Youth are in need of mental health services after release	76.4	12.5	11.1	100.0
Mental health services will be readily available in urban locations	42.6	35.3	22.1	100.0
Mental health services will be readily available in rural locations	21.7	31.9	46.4	100.0
Youth are likely to utilize mental health services after release	10.1	40.6	49.3	100.0

STAFF PERCEPTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT FOR YOUTH

Substance Abuse Treatment	Percent (%) responding they "agree" or "strongly agree"	Percent (%) responding "neutral"	Percent (%) responding they "disagree" or "strongly disagree"	Total (%)
Youth are in need of substance abuse treatment after release	80.6	11.1	8.3	100.0
Substance abuse treatment will be readily available in urban locations	57.4	29.4	13.2	100.0
Substance abuse treatment will be readily available in rural locations	26.5	38.2	35.3	100.0
Youth are likely to utilize substance abuse treatment after release	14.7	32.4	52.9	100.0

STAFF PERCEPTION OF MONEY MANAGEMENT/BUDGETING ASSISTANCE FOR YOUTH

Money Management/Budgeting Assistance	Percent (%) responding they "agree" or "strongly agree"	Percent (%) responding "neutral"	Percent (%) responding they "disagree" or "strongly disagree"	Total (%)
Youth are in need of money management/budgeting assistance after release	81.9	13.9	4.2	100.0
Money management/budgeting assistance will be readily available in urban locations	47.4	33.3	19.3	100.0
Money management/budgeting assistance will be readily available in rural locations	29.8	35.1	35.1	100.0
Youth are likely to utilize money management/budgeting assistance after release	20.3	29.7	50.0	100.0

STAFF PERCEPTION OF YOUTH MENTORING SERVICES

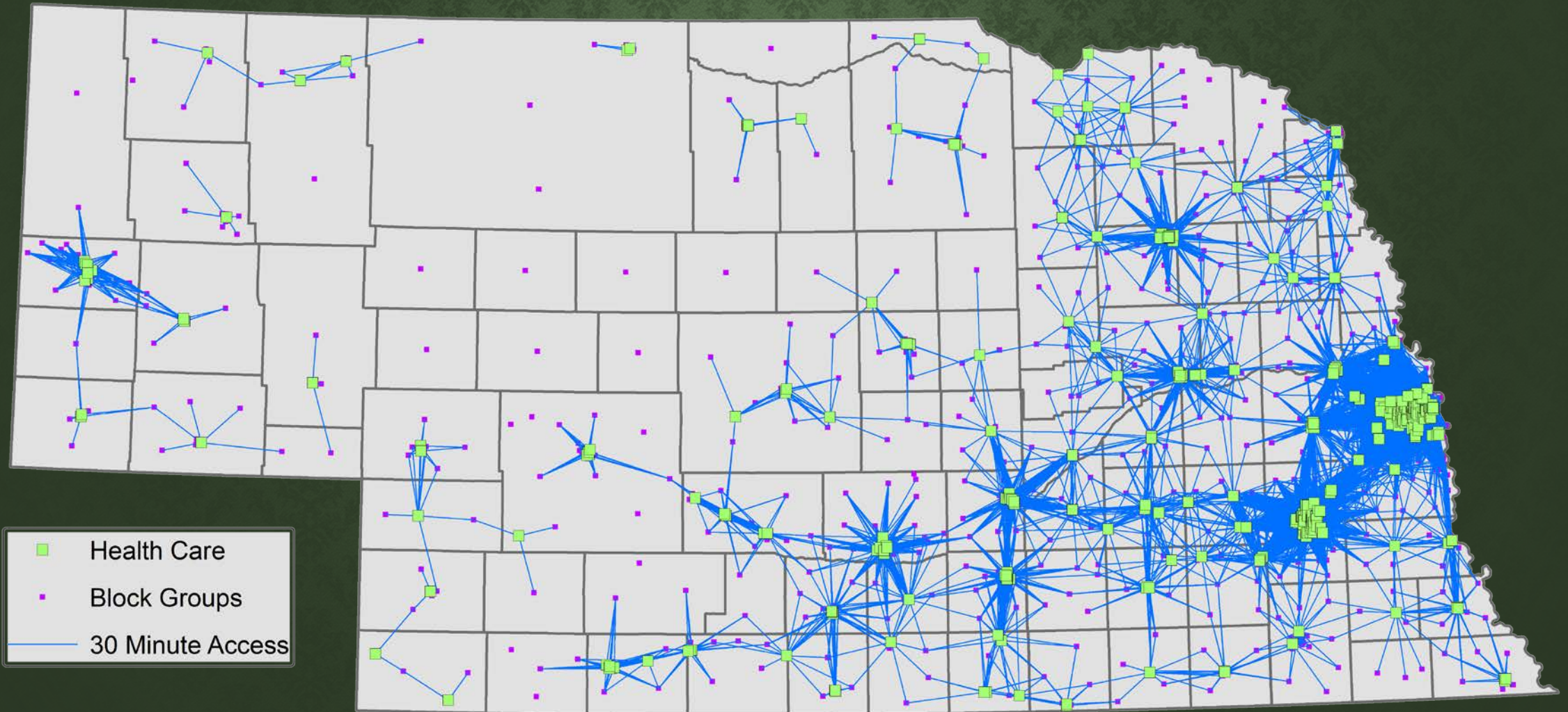| Youth Mentoring	Percent (%) responding they "agree" or "strongly agree"	Percent (%) responding "neutral"	Percent (%) responding they "disagree" or "strongly disagree"	Total (%)
Youth are in need of mentoring after release	86.3	8.2	5.5	100.0
Mentoring will be readily available in urban locations	44.8	35.8	19.4	100.0
Mentoring will be readily available in rural locations	28.1	28.1	43.8	100.0
Youth are likely to utilize mentoring after release	17.9	31.3	50.7	100.0

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How accessible are rehabilitation services
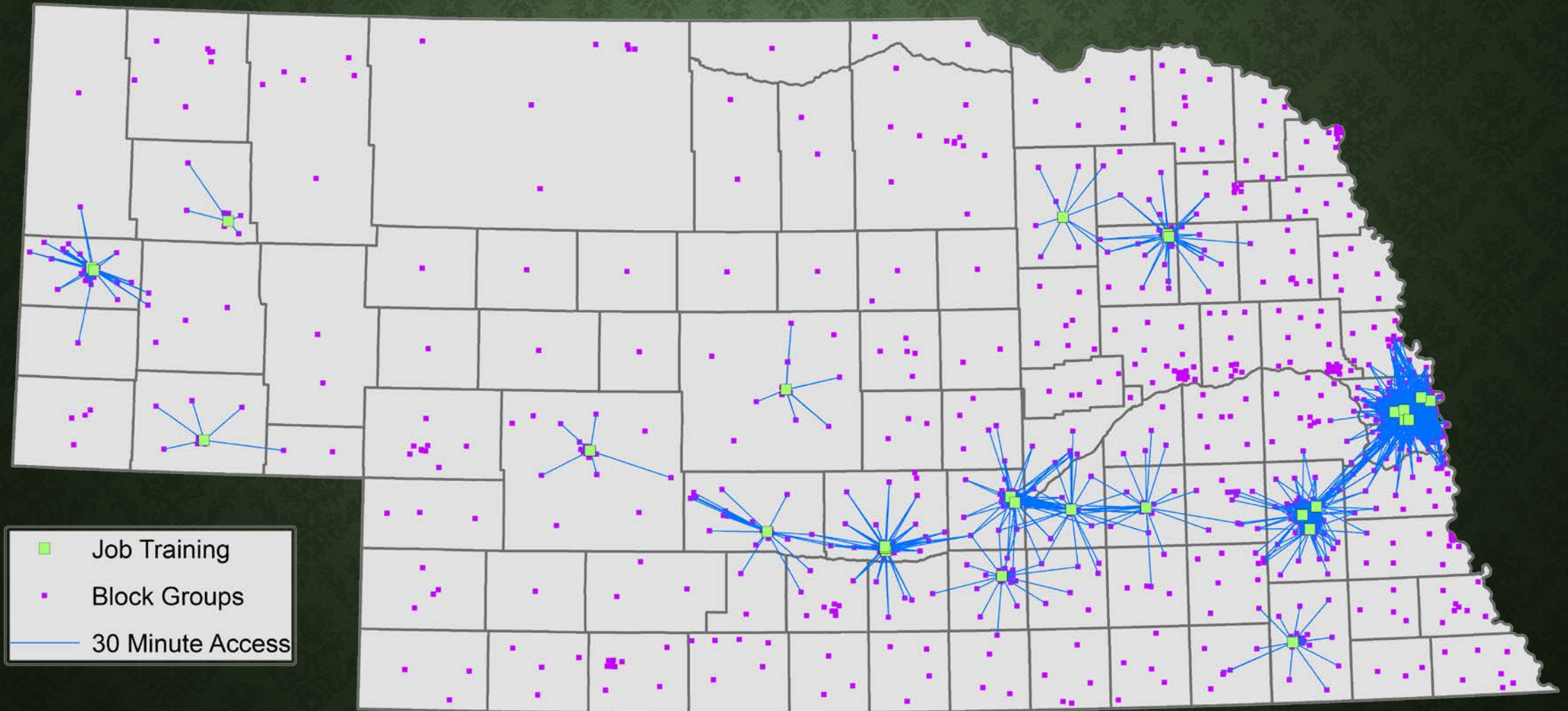
to Nebraska's youth?

METHODOLOGY

- U.S. Census Bureau TIGER / Line shapefiles files were downloaded and imported into an ArcMap geodatabase (GDB). Specific layers include: counties, roads, block groups, places.

- ArcGIS's Business Analyst provided the following: youth rehabilitation services point-layer grouped by North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) into twelve (12) service categories, Census demographic data including counts of 15 to 19 year-olds by block group.

- An Origin-Destination (OD) matrix was calculated in ArcGIS's Network Analyst across the road network between each service location by youth *service type* and the *block group* centroids within a 30-minutes network travel time (based on road length and speed limits).

- The resulting OD-cost matrix produces both a graphical representation of all *block group* centroids within a 30-minute travel time to *services* and tabular output of accessibility for youth to each service weighted by the total number of 15 to 19 year-olds within the block group.

NEBRASKANS AGED 15-19 YEARS WITH ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES WITHIN A 30-MINUTE DRIVE TIME

Health Care
Block Groups
30 Minute Access

NEBRASKANS AGED 15-19 YEARS WITH ACCESS TO JOB TRAINING AND CAREER SERVICES WITHIN A 30-MINUTE DRIVE TIME

Job Training
Block Groups
30 Minute Access

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Over 99 percent of youth aged 15 to 19 in Nebraska would have access within a 30-minute drive time to a health care facility following their release.

- For other services, such as Job Training / Career Services, Transitional Living, and Housing Assistance, the proportion of *unserved* youth within a 30-minute drive time increases from 1 percent (health care) to between 20 to 24 percent. This includes a majority of the population outside of the Omaha or Lincoln metro areas and Tri-Cities.

- If the need for *accessible* services is defined by a 15-minute drive time, while over 91 percent of youth would still have access to health care, between 33 to 40 percent would be *unserved* by these other service categories.

"Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems."

-Gever Tulley

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