



EVALUATION OF FINDING IMPROVEMENT BY REACHING EMPOWERMENT (FIRE)

Allison A. Howland, Ph.D. & Jeffrey A. Anderson, Ph.D.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide a formative evaluation of *Finding Improvement by Reaching Empowerment* (FIRE), a youth peer support program sponsored by One Community One Family (OCOF). Since 2009, FIRE has been dedicated to empowering at-risk youth to self-advocate for social change in their community with regard to mental health awareness and service provision. This brief provides summary of program review data from 2010 to 2012.

Findings/Outcomes

- OCOF employs two Peer Support Specialists and two Youth Development Coordinators as FIRE program staff. The Youth Development Coordinators are CMHC employees with a history of vested interest and expertise in youth engagement who provide guidance to Peer Support Specialists and oversee program coordination for FIRE. The Peer Support Specialists are young adults who have personal experience with service provision provided by community service agencies that partner with OCOF and have effectively engaged in their own service provision and treatment program.
- To date, over 20 youth have attended peer support groups hosted by FIRE Peer Support Specialists, offered weekly in Lawrenceburg and twice per month in Batesville, IN. These support groups are open to ALL youth, with a target age range of 13 to 25 years and provide a safe environment for fun and relaxation, as well as supportive interaction with FIRE peer support specialists and other youth experiencing similar challenges. Surveys conducted in 2012 and taken by 30 people indicate that 96% of youth attendees found their experiences at peer support groups to be helpful and positive (See Table 1).

Table 1: FIRE Youth Support Groups Evaluation Responses (30 respondents)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Youth Engagement Specialist made me feel welcome.	78%	22%	0%	0%
I felt comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings with the group.	54%	43%	3%	0%
I felt comfortable listening to others if I didn't feel like talking.	68%	32%	0%	0%
This group session helped me understand myself and what I'm going through.	54%	46%	0%	0%
I was able to talk to other peers who understand what I'm going through.	57%	39%	4%	0%
I would like to attend the next group session	71%	29%	0%	0%

- FIRE Peer Support Specialists have provided one-to-one peer support to over 30 individual youth enrolled in OCOF, from 6 of 8 counties in the service provision area (See Figure 1). These peer supports are categorized as supportive counseling (72% of all contacts), case management (8% of all contacts), and skill building (20% of all contacts), with over 260 contacts hours reported to date (See Figure 2).

Figure 1: FIRE Referrals for One-to-One Peer Support by County

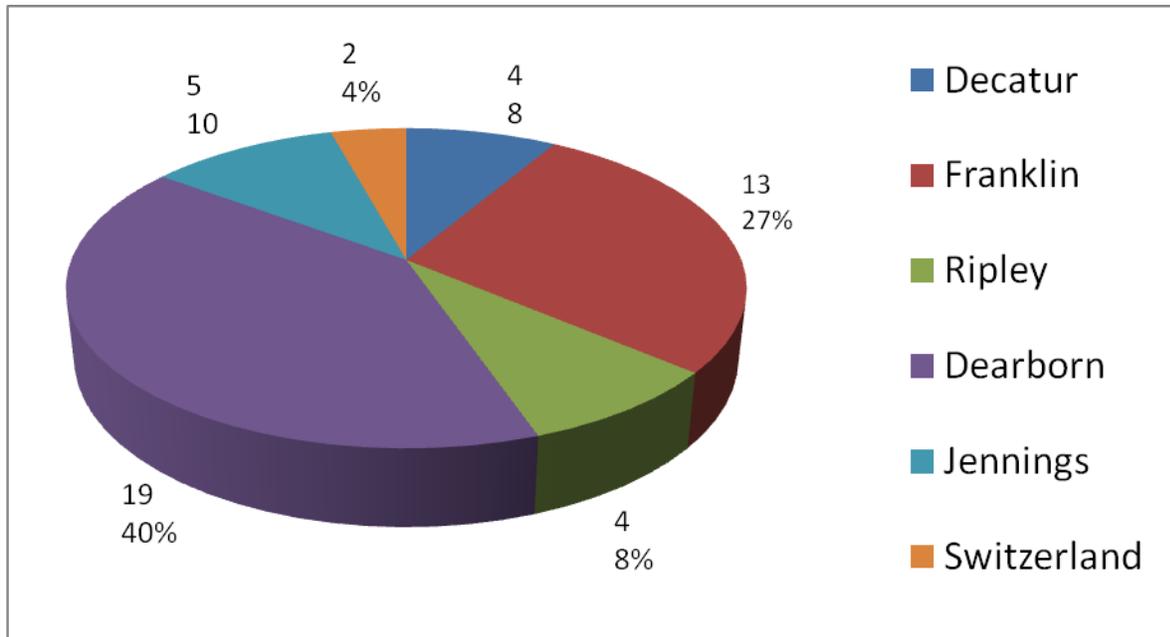


Figure 2: FIRE One-to-One Peer Support Contact Hours

