

YLS/CMI™ 2.0: Leisure/Recreation

This brief aims to provide information for all Youth Justice staff about for what works for young people when addressing assessed need in the Leisure/Recreation domain of the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI™) 2.0.

High need in Leisure/Recreation: What does this mean?

Young people who have high need within the Leisure/Recreation domain of the YLS/CMI™ will often:

- Be disengaged from organised prosocial activities.
- Associate less with prosocial individuals.
- Achieve a sense of connection through antisocial networks and groups.
- Lack a regular daily routine.
- Struggle to remain engaged in structured activities.

How to address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Addressing the Leisure/Recreation need means identifying some of the criminogenic thinking patterns linked to motivation to engage in leisure and recreation for example, identifying with antisocial companions and/or demand for excitement; and helping the young person to **develop positive connections and a sense of belonging within prosocial groups**. You should encourage them to:

- Participate in rewarding activities.
- Regularly engage in structured activities (e.g. prosocial group or clubs).
- Develop a sense of connection to prosocial individuals through planned activities.

Can participation in sport address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Yes, but only if it includes regular and ongoing participation that promotes social connection.

Participation in sport is beneficial for a young person's health and mental wellbeing. There is some evidence that sport programs [can reduce reoffending](#). However, participation in sport alone does not change reoffending behaviour. Instead, the change in offending behaviour happens because of [a sense of belonging and positive relationships](#) that can be developed in a sport setting. This means that to reduce reoffending, a sport program must provide [social connections and positive role modelling](#).

Can traditional martial arts address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Sometimes, if practiced for a long time and based in a philosophy of non-violence.

Research shows that practice of traditional martial arts (e.g. Karate, Judo, Taekwondo, Aikido, Kung Fu) can [reduce aggressive behaviour](#) and [increase mental and physical health](#) when it is practiced [over a long period of time](#). A consistent practice can help to develop [emotional control and self-regulation](#). To achieve these benefits, physical training should be supplemented by a philosophy that emphasises [prosocial behaviours](#), [non-violence aggression](#), and [respect for others](#). Further, trainers play a significant role in guiding positive change. Behavioural changes occur when trainers [encourage students to take responsibility, maintain rules, and promote open communication](#).

Can modern martial arts address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Maybe, but they are less effective than traditional martial arts.

Research about the effects of modern martial arts (e.g. Boxing, MMA, Kickboxing) on offending behaviour is mixed. Modern martial arts focus more on physical techniques than philosophy, and do not provide the same mental benefits as traditional martial arts. Some studies reveal participation in boxing increases aggressiveness outside the gym and non-violent antisocial behaviour. Boxing can reinforce beliefs that violence is an appropriate response to a problem and there is often hyper-masculine talk that occurs in boxing gyms which contributes to this. Some of the messages transmitted in boxing gyms exclude women, promote homophobia and mirror derogatory street talk. As such, participation in boxing can reinforce antisocial behaviour rather than prevent it. Researchers argue that to be effective in reducing reoffending, boxing classes need to think more strategically about the use of the sport and teach young people that it is masculine to walk away from violence rather than to physically respond to it.

Can social media and online gaming address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Maybe, when it is age-appropriate, structured, prosocial, and used in moderation.

Social media: Australian teenagers and young people spend a lot of time on social media – on average 2 hours per day. Social media platforms are not inherently good or bad. When used appropriately, social media can promote social engagement, positive development, communication, and creativity. On the other hand, overuse of social media correlates with social exclusion, self-harm or suicide, victimisation depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. For young people in contact with Youth Justice, social media can provide a platform to brag about crimes, connect with antisocial peers, and commit cyber-crimes, such as cyber-stalking and bullying.

Gaming: Video games can also have positive or negative influence on young people. They can teach problem-solving, teamwork, and cooperation. On the other hand, video games can also correlate with increased aggression, reduced victim empathy, and offending behaviour. For social media and video games to have a positive effect on young people, supervision of online activity, age-appropriate games and content, and conversations about privacy and online abuse are advised.

What other activities address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Any **regular group-based engagement** within community that fosters a sense of belonging and commitment can contribute to reducing need in the Leisure/Recreation domain. For example, regular attendance at a church youth group, cultural-based arts groups (arts, dance, theatre, storytelling). Connecting a young person to specific **community agencies** or people in a **mentoring** capacity can also assist to develop personal interests and increase likelihood of ongoing attendance and commitment to prosocial activities.

What core programs address high need in Leisure/Recreation?

Core internal programs that address high Leisure/Recreation needs include:

- Integrated Case Management (ICM)
- Transition to Success (T2S)
- Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART)
- Black Chicks Talking (BCT)
- Young, Black and Proud (YBP)
- Emotional Regulation and Impulse Control (ERIC)*
- Girls... Moving On (GMO)

*Note ERIC does not address Leisure/Recreation needs specifically, however delivery of specific modules within ERIC are likely to complement service responses targeting this area.