

Programs vs Activities

This guide will discuss the meaning of 'program' and 'activity' and the differences in the context of Youth Justice.

What is a program?

A program is a set of related structured services designed to target and achieve a specific goal (see [YJ Programs: What Works - Change-Oriented Programs and Services](#)).

In Youth Justice, the goal is to change the thinking and behaviour of young people related to offending risk, to reduce young people's reoffending risk. For programs to be change-oriented, they are either:

- **Evidence-based:** These programs or service types have had high quality research or evaluation that has proven they achieve or support reduced reoffending.
- **Evidence-informed:** Programs or services where the design is based on service types that have been proven to reduce offending. This means the program is likely to reduce reoffending but has not yet proven that it reduces reoffending, as the program outcomes have not yet been assessed through research or evaluation.

What is an activity?

An activity is something that is done with and for young people.

In Youth Justice, an activity is a planned or unplanned event with a young person. Examples include:

- **Prosocial activities:** Life skills, recreation, sport, bushwalking, cooking, fishing, etc.
- **Personal and practical support:** Welfare support, obtaining identification, attending Centrelink, opening a bank account, etc.

What is the difference between programs and activities?

The main difference is the outcome that each achieve. YJ Programs are designed to challenge thinking and behaviour and have evidence proving they are likely to achieve and support reduced offending.

Engaging young people in activities, outside of a structured program, without planned intent toward specific goals, is **unlikely to be effective** in sustaining change and reducing reoffending. Activities can be embedded in and through change-oriented programs and used to build readiness and relationships, however on their own are unlikely to reduce offending.

This is because activities alone do not directly target reoffending risks and needs that are proven predictors of reoffending. Activities should be planned as part of the Service Response Plan and have specific goals related to reducing risk and needs in domains that the young person has scored highly in on the YLS/CMI Assessment tool.

What is the role of partner organisations?

Activities may be best delivered by external agencies. Referrals in these instances will link a young person to an agency that they can build a relationship with, continue to engage with, and get support from even after their orders with Youth Justice are completed.

What are different types of programs and activities in Youth Justice?

Youth Justice provides programs to young people and their families – either directly, or by referring them to other providers.

Type	Definition
Internal	
Core Program	Core programs are change-oriented, offence-focused programs delivered by Youth Justice or in partnership with others that are evidence-based/informed to achieve or support reductions in reoffending. Currently, there are nine programs in this category: T2S, ICM, ART, CHART, ERIC, BCT, YBP, GMO and ROAD.
Initiative	An initiative is a program or activity linked to the Youth Justice Strategy with distinct funding. Initiatives may be time-limited or perhaps considered a trial. They are not yet considered a core program. They may be offered only in specific locations. Permanent or ongoing funding, or progression to core program status, will be dependent on evaluation/s.
Common Program	Manualised, structured programs that are common across centres, however not considered as 'core' and not demonstrated to be evidence-based or evidence-informed. These are delivered by Youth Justice or in partnership with others - however may also exist outside of Youth Justice eg Love Bites, RAGE, etc.
Local Program	Programs designed, developed, and delivered by local centres, but not considered a common or core program. Local programs may progress to become a common or core program, through formal classification and evaluation-based processes.
Common Activity	Activities that are commonly delivered across centres that contribute to building relationships and providing personal and practical support. Common activities are directly aligned with 'Support and Relationship Building' areas on Youth Justice Outcomes Framework.
Young People Case Activities	Administration and statutory-based activities, such as interviews. There are not expected to bring about behavioural change in young people, however, support critical business areas such as proposals and reports to the court, alongside assessment.
External	
Youth Justice Funded	A program or activity for which Youth Justice has a contract in place to be delivered.
Community Agency	A program or activity that is delivered by a local community agency, publicly available within local area.
Individual Person	A program or activity that is delivered by an individual person (i.e. Elder or mentor) within the local area.

What Works: Change-Oriented Programs and Services

What does change-oriented mean?

Change-oriented refers to approaches, programs, and services that aim to bring about **changes in thinking and behaviour**. There are two types of change-oriented programs and services:

<p style="text-align: center;">Offending Focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use strategies to achieve and sustain changes in thinking and behaviour. • Target reoffending risks and needs. • Are proven through research to reduce reoffending. • Can be used on its own to drive behaviour change. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Developmental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are educational/psychoeducational – can build awareness and readiness. • Use strategies to change thinking. • Encourages and supports behaviour change. • Unlikely to lead to behaviour change unless also delivered with offending focused programs.
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What offending focused service types are known to reduce reoffending?

A well-designed [meta-analysis](#) of over 500 high quality research and evaluation studies identified [14 effective service types](#), grouped into three broad areas:

Restorative Services	Counselling Services	Skill Building Services
Repair harm done to victim/s from offending. Worker uses training and skills to help young people understand harm caused and give back to victim/ community to make amends.	Relationship between the young person/family and worker is key. Through the relationship, the worker uses training and skills to provide guidance and influences feelings, thoughts, and behaviours.	Worker delivers practice, incentives, directions, and programs aimed at developing the young person skills to understand and manage their behaviours, increasing their ability to participate in a prosocial lifestyle.
Dosage ranges from 4-12 weeks and 8-60 hours .	Dosage ranges from 4-26 weeks and 8-78 hours .	Most dosage ranges from 4-26 weeks and 45-100 hours .

Research has proven [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy \(CBT\)](#) (a skill-building service type) is the most effective approach to reduce youth reoffending. **Group counselling** (a counselling service type) is the next most effective. All service types can be tailored to be responsive to culture, gender, age, ability, trauma, and other aspects as needed (see [RNR: Need](#) and [RNR: Responsivity](#) for more information).

How does Youth Justice apply the effective offending focused service types?

Queensland Youth Justice Services	Restorative	Counselling	Skill-Building
Restorative Justice processes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Motivational Interviewing approaches		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
CBT-based programs: Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART), Emotional Regulation and Impulse Control (ERIC), Aggression Replacement Training (ART), Girls Moving On (GMO)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Culturally specific programs: Young, Black and Proud (YBP), Black Chicks Talking (BCT)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Rethinking Our Attitudes to Driving (ROAD)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transition to Success (T2S)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Intensive Case Management (ICM)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Main service type Other types dependant on facilitation

Why are educational or developmental programs and services important?

Youth Justice involved young people and families are often [not seeking help](#) to change. They are involved with Youth Justice because they have to be, and they may not be interested in accessing or seeking support. **Developmental programs and services** can help young people and families become more [motivated to change](#) and be ready to participate and engage in more intensive offence focused programs and services. However, developmental programs and services are **less likely** to lead to longer term behaviour change and reduced reoffending.

What educational or developmental programs and services are commonly used?

Common Services	Common Programs
<p>Individual sessions designed to educate the young person in a specific topic area, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring what a healthy relationship is. <p>External services delivering psychoeducation sessions, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Frogs: Party safe sessions. • Ted Noffs Foundation: Effects of substance use awareness sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-Navigating Anger and Guilty Emotions (RAGE) • Drumbeat • Ted Noffs Foundation (Street Uni): Timetabled programs • Girls with a Purpose • Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES): Road Attitudes and Action Planning (RAAP) sessions

What doesn't work?

Standalone activities are not enough to sustain changes to thinking and behaviour and reduce reoffending.

Engaging young people in activities outside of a structured program, without purpose and planned intent toward specific goals, is **unlikely** to be [effective](#) in reducing reoffending.

Standalone activities may help relationship building and general engagement. They may also be needed to support referrals and connect young people with community agencies. Use of standalone activities should be limited and clearly connected to longer term change-oriented goals.

How to use activities to support behaviour change?

Activities can be used to engage young people in the delivery of program content and/or as incentives or rewards for participation alongside change-oriented programs and services.

Change-Oriented Programs and Services	Example Activities to Support Delivery
Motivational Interviewing	Any activity that the young person shows interest in (e.g. sketching, cooking, fishing, basketball, walking on the beach) to: Engage in a specific topic of discussion for the purpose of goal setting, recognising sustain talk, and encouraging change talk.
<p>Group Programs: <i>BCT, YBP, ROAD, ART</i> CBT Programs: <i>ERIC, CHART, ART</i> CBT Techniques: <i>Challenging antisocial thinking</i></p>	As above, with the purpose of group forming, completing program content/worksheets through discussion and stories (narratives), exploring values, morals, and beliefs, and identifying and respectfully challenging thought traps and irrational beliefs.
Problem-Solving Components of Programs	Purposefully creating a minor problem situation in any activity (e.g. forgetting something, getting lost). Specific problem-solving activities, adventure-based , and experiential learning activities are used to teach steps, debrief, and transfer learning to other situations.