



# Why Use Strength-Based Assessment?

\* Benefits to Youth and Staff \*

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# Objectives of this session

- Develop an understanding of the strength-based perspective and why it is appropriate for juvenile justice and adolescent treatment settings
- Explore the benefits of adopting strength-based practices, including assessment and service planning
- Gain a tool for identifying strengths in youth (and families)

# Introductions

- Name of individual or team
- Agency/where you work
- Job title(s) or role(s)

# Why do youth come to us?

- Why do youth
  - commit crime,
  - violate probation,
  - use alcohol & other drugs,
  - and otherwise end up on an unhealthy path?

# What can (or do) we do about it?

- How do we prevent (or intervene to reduce) drug use and criminality in youth?
- How do we intervene to facilitate change?

# How do we facilitate change?

- Find out what strengths are present that we can build on (at all levels – individual, family, community, etc.)
- Add & affirm (replacement behaviors)
- Decrease access to negative influences
- Use resources in the natural environment (sustainability)
- Clearly describe what behaviors we want to see

# Why focus on competencies?

- Improves service systems
  - Augments assessment
  - Increases creativity
  - Increases service integration
  - Improves staff morale
  - Improves sustainability of changes

# Benefits of a strength-based approach to programming

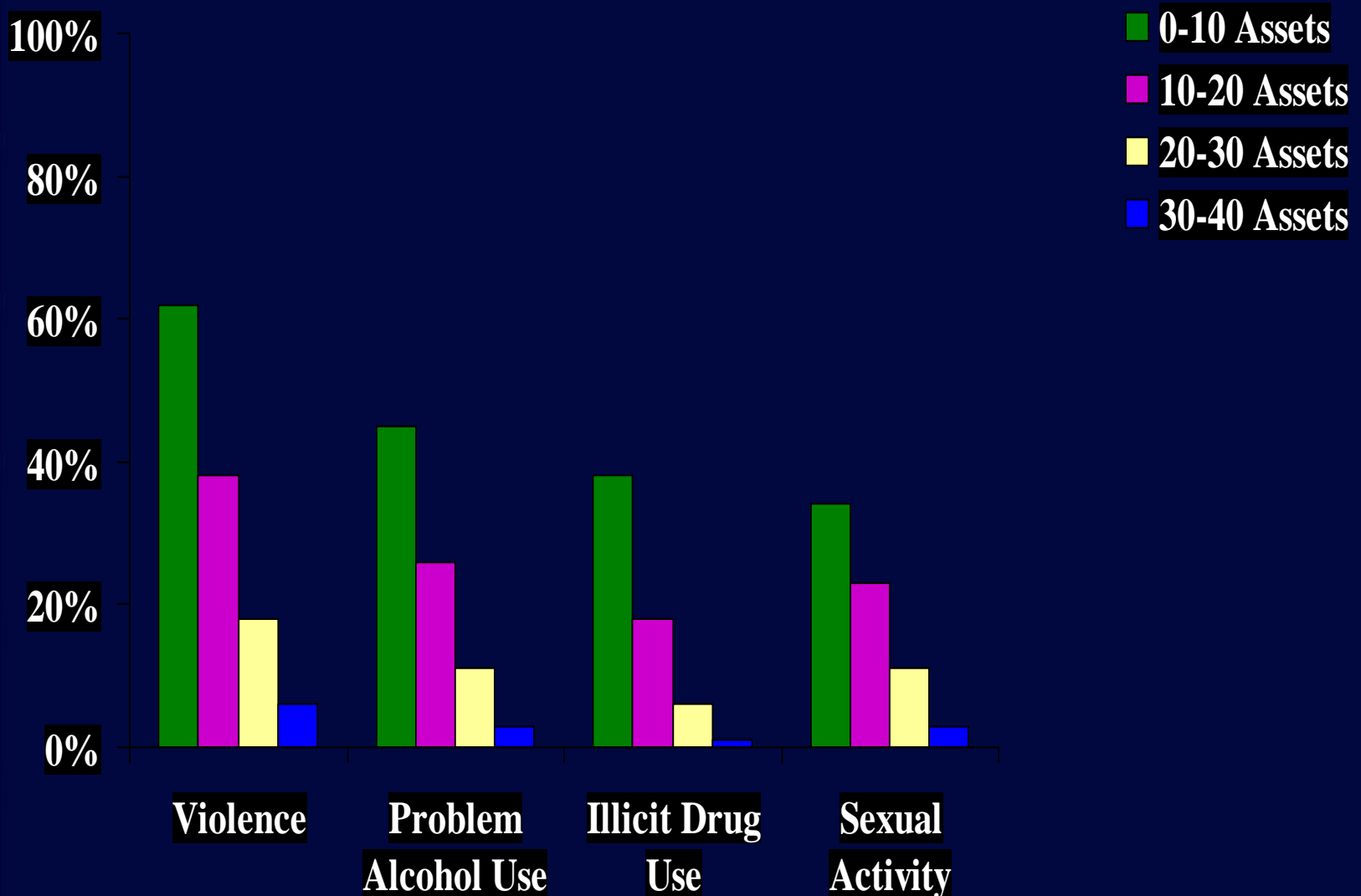
- Builds engagement: requires active participation by youth and families
- Builds relationships
- Makes our work fun (prevents staff burn-out)
- Increases accountability
- Increases optimism and builds hope



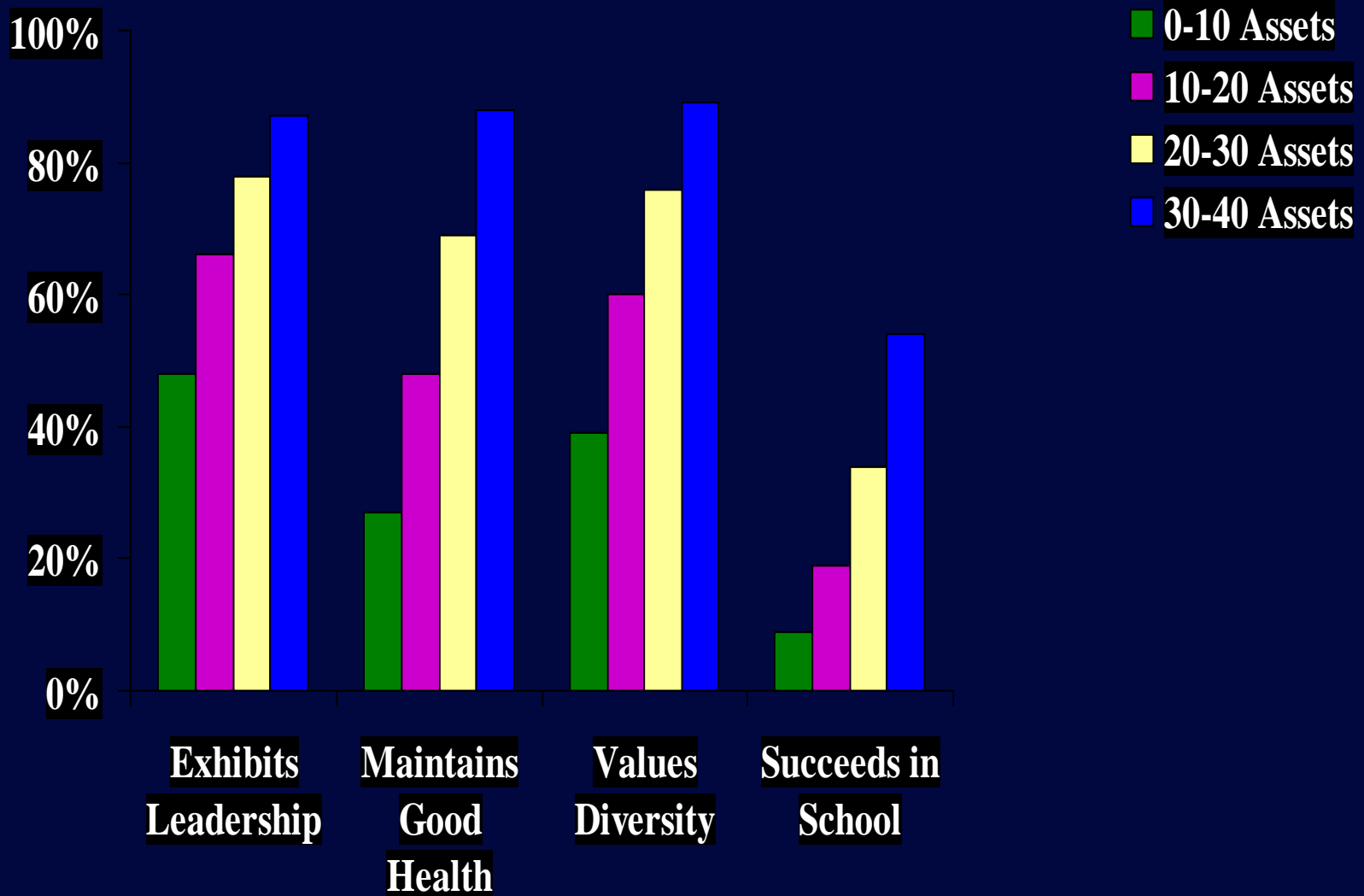
# Strengths approaches are:

- Based on research
  - Assets/protective factors
  - Behavioral science
  - Adolescent development
- Ecological
- Attentive to diversity

# Protection From High-Risk Behaviors



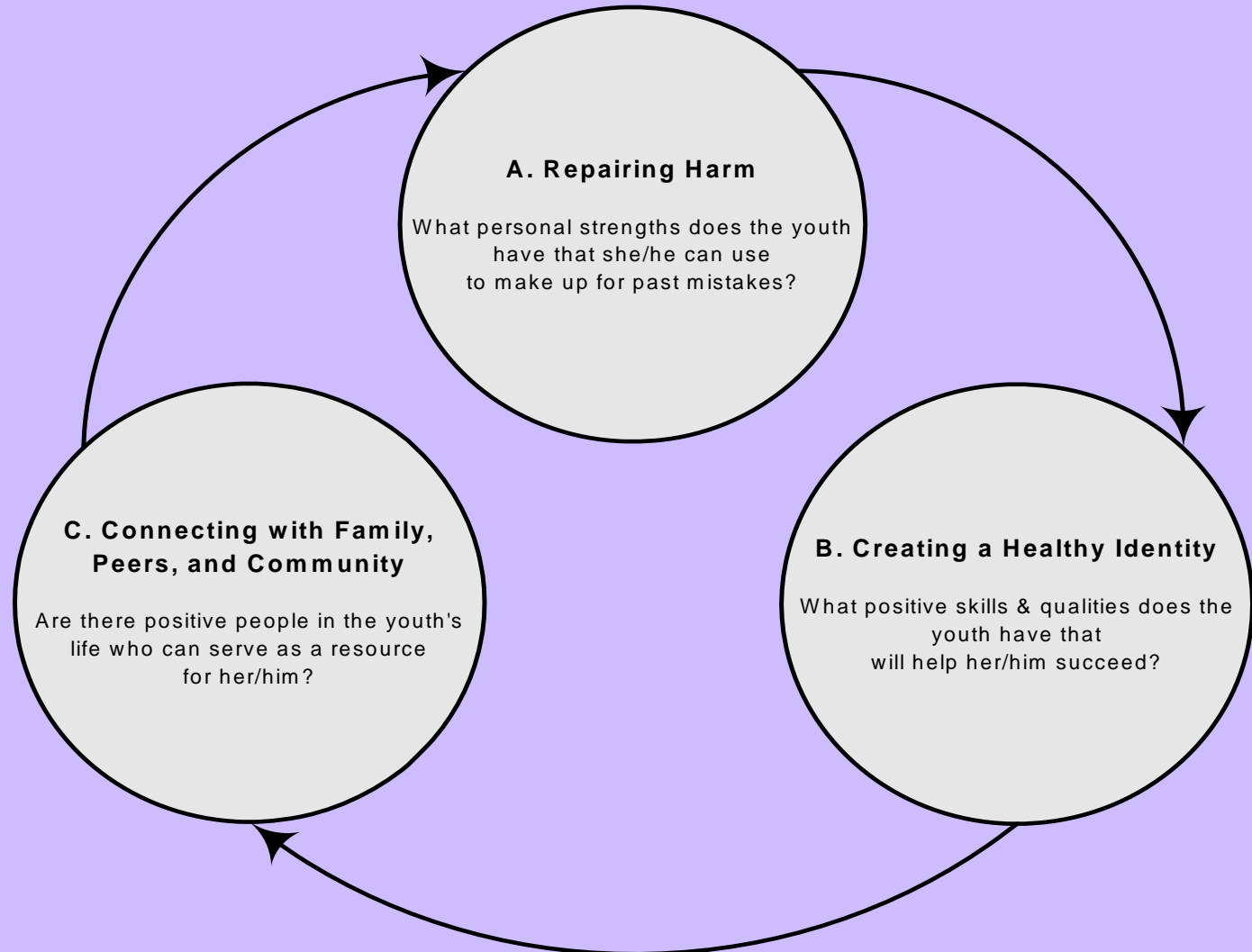
# Promoting Positive Attitudes and Behaviors



# The Youth Competency Assessment (YCA)

# Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Model

## Youth Competency Assessment (YCA) Model



# Creating a Healthy Identity

- Identity development is a central task of adolescence
- Identification of skills, competencies, interests, and goals for the future
- Identification of resources to support this growth
- Help others in youth's environment recognize and confirm youth's positive identity

# Connecting to Family, Peers, and Community

- Strong connections with families, positive peers, and community are protective:
  - Less likely to commit crimes and more respectful of others
  - Greater health
  - Increased positive social control
- There may be a need to advocate for community support for juvenile justice involved youth

# Repairing Harm, Developing Pro-Social Norms and Values

- Learn important lessons from their behavior/ choices
- Facilitate moral development
- Reduce antisocial attitude: a major risk factor for juvenile justice involvement
- Increase public safety and restitution for victims
- Modify behavior



# Summary of Research Findings

# Staff benefits

- Staff reported:
  - Improved rapport with and increased buy-in from youth and their parents/guardians
  - Increased job satisfaction and staff morale
  - Cases ending more quickly
  - Decreased need for sanctions
  - Helps identify ideas and resources

# Youth/Family benefits

- Youth and families reported:
  - Meetings were more positive
  - Counselor cared about their point of view
  - Counselor more likely to ask about strengths & less likely to talk about what they did wrong
  - Felt counselor was helpful and fair

# Differences are visible

- Based on ratings of videotaped interviews:
  - Increased use of strength-based practice (*compared to non-YCA interviews*)
  - Improved use of positive non-verbal cues and more positive interview atmosphere (*compared to non-YCA interviews*)

# Assessments have more information

	PILOT SITES	COMPARISON
Creating a healthy identity	83% (0%)	52% (10%)
Connecting with family, peers, community	77% (0%)	0% (61%)
Repairing harm, developing pro-social norms/values	49% (10%)	0% (23%)

# Service plans have more information

	PILOT SITES	COMPARISON
Creating a healthy identity	76%	32%
Connecting with family, peers, community	65%	42%
Repairing harm, developing pro-social norms/values	38%	67%

# Social climate improves

<b>RESIDENTS</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Involvement</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>Support</b>
<i>Expressiveness</i>	<b>Expressiveness</b>
<i>Autonomy</i>	<b>Autonomy</b>
<b>Practical Orientation</b>	<b>Practical Orientation</b>
<b>Personal Problem Orientation</b>	<i>Personal Problem Orientation</i>
<b>Order and Organization</b>	<b>Order and Organization</b>
<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Clarity</b>
<b>Staff Control</b>	<i>Staff control</i>

# Critical incidents decrease

	PRE-YCA	POST-YCA
Critical incidents per month	6.7	1.5



# How the tool is used

- Integrate with risk and needs assessment
- Create case/service plans
- Write court reports
- Establish documentation
- Share information with other service providers working with the youth/family

# Casework

- Write an assessment summary
- Create strength-based goals
- Keep coming back to strengths
- Plan for the end of service from the beginning

# Supplemental materials and resources

- Training manual, including exercises and handouts
- Training, technical assistance, and consultation

# Review Session Objectives

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# Questions?

# How can I get more information or assistance?

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