

# Marion County

Judge Deborah Alspach

Judge Robert Fragale

## Program Name

Exploring the Role of Trauma with Diversion Youth: Assessing & Offering Services

## Program Intervention

Evidenced-based trauma group "Structured Sensory Intervention for Traumatized Children, Adolescents & Parents- At-Risk Adjudicated Treatment Program – SITCAP-Art"

## Primary Service Location

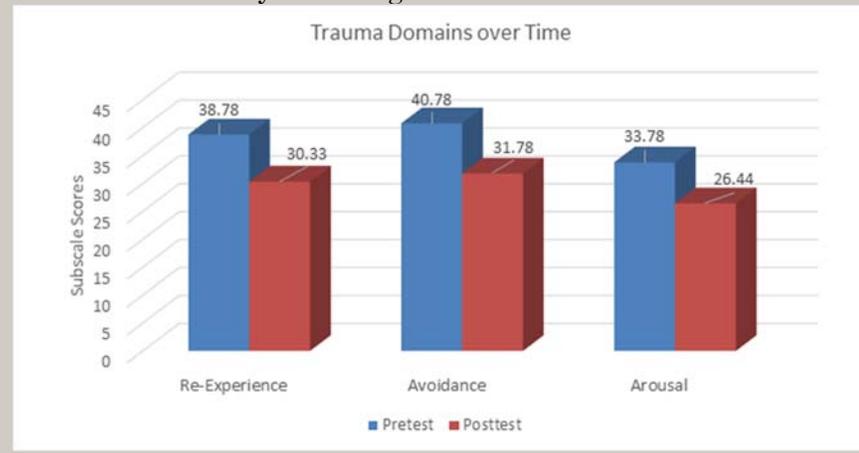
School and Juvenile Court

## Program Description

The purpose of the program is to reduce future court involvement of diversion youth by addressing their acting out/disruptive behavior that may be a result of unidentified and untreated trauma they have experienced. The 7-week trauma group is offered to male and female diversion youth, ages 13-17 who screen positive on the ACE trauma screen. This program was selected because it is evidenced based and its published evaluations have concluded improvement on the pre and post PTSD assessment scores. A pre-group trauma symptom assessment is conducted with each youth. The parent(s) are asked to complete a history/behavior questionnaire and they are provided with an educational packet about the impact of trauma. In the safety of the group, youth will process their memories and experiences, resulting in the restoration of more effective emotional functioning which restores cognitive functioning, leading to clearer thinking and positive coping strategies.

## Outcomes

One of the goals of the program is to improve self-reported trauma symptoms over time. The program uses the PTSD Questionnaire from the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC). The TLC-PTSD scores have improved (lower scores indicate fewer symptoms) from pre-test to post-test for those youth who have completed the trauma group. In addition, 10 youth have been successfully diverted from the court system and eight of these youth have not incurred any new charges.



## Program Snapshot

(As of June 30, 2016)

### Gender:

Female 100%

### Race/Ethnicity:

White 100%

### Age Range:

13-17

### Offense Level:

Misdemeanors & At-Risk

### Youth Re-offense Risk Level:

Low & Moderate

### Screens & Assessments:

OYAS Diversion Tool, ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Screen; SITCAP pre & post PTSD symptom assessment

### Program Start Date:

August 19, 2015

### Received Services:

14 Youth & Families

### Program Completion Successes:

10 Youth & Families

3 Youth & Families Continuing into FY 2017

### Average # of Service Units:

13.7 Direct Service Hours Per Youth

3 Direct Service Hours Per Family

### Program Partners:

- Marion Area Counseling Center
- Marion City Schools
- Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education, Case Western Reserve University

## Program Information Contact

Kathy Clark, PhD, LISW-S

Director of Programming and Research

Marion County Family Court

222 W. Center Street

Marion, Ohio 43302

740-223-4254

kclark@co.marion.oh.us

## Lessons Learned

Attendance/Participation in the group was voluntary which resulted in low numbers despite the high number of diversion youth who flagged positive on the trauma screen. The offer of a \$25.00 gift card for completion of group did not increase the number of group participants.

Youth told us they didn't want to attend the group because it was held at the court and they didn't know group leaders. Based on that information, future groups will be held at the middle school during the day. The school staff successfully secured 25 signed parental consent forms for the upcoming 2016-17 school year's groups. Because the school staff were so successful in obtaining participants and consent, monies from the grant will pay for a school guidance counselor to reach out to families during the summer months for additional participants.

Expanding the groups into the middle school allows for true diversion. Youth will be identified much earlier as at risk by school staff via school incident reports versus charges leading to a youth being placed in court's diversion program.

# Marion County Early Successes – SITCAP Art

“Children exhibiting problematic behaviors are often times the result of traumatic experiences in their lives. Our ability to identify these behaviors, and their causes, provide the opportunity for us to understand and address their needs – the trauma groups provide such an opportunity.”

**Honorable Robert Fragale**



“Grant is grateful to DYS for making this opportunity to partner with the Marion County Family Court possible to provide support to students through trauma groups in schools. The trauma counseling will be implemented with students who are struggling behaviorally in school and are having issues attending school on a regular basis. The groups are a step in stopping the school - prison pipeline.”

**Adam Kunkle**  
**Principal**  
**Grant Middle School**



“Even though the group is now over, my daughter talks about the group all the time. She wishes the group was still going on. She said it helped her a lot with her anger.”

**Mother of 14-year-old female participant**

“I have seen significant decreases in the pre and post PTSD scores of the youth who attend the trauma groups. The groups provide a safe place to process feeling and to learn constructive coping strategies.”

**Anita Ritchey, MA, LPC**  
**Group Co-leader**

**Youth Success Story** - “Amy” is a 15-year-old female who was in the diversion program. Amy had experienced the death of her father, violence in the family and had witnessed drug abuse. She indicated on her pre-test that she often felt sick with stomach aches and headaches, she blocked her feelings, did not want to be left alone and got into trouble at home “all the time.” Her mother stated Amy had changed after the events and she was now moody, verbally aggressive, physically fights with others, grades are dropping, and she was defiant to her mother. After completing the trauma group, Amy’s post PTSD symptom score dropped by 11 points. She stated on her exit evaluations that she “definitely felt better” and “didn’t feel so weighed down.” Six months’ post group, Amy is doing better in school and has not had any further involvement in the family court.



**Program Success Story** - Three trauma groups have been conducted, serving 11 youth and a fourth group is currently meeting, serving an additional five youth. All 11 youth successful completed the entire 7-week group sessions and all youth showed a decrease in the PTSD post assessment scores. The Marion County Family Court welcomed the opportunity to partner with the Marion City School to expand the groups into the schools at the request of the school counselors and the first school-based group was offered this past spring. These were youth that the school identified as “at risk” due to disruptive behavior but had not yet been in a court diversion program. The pre PTSD scores for the school based group were significantly higher than the diversion youth’s (average of 20 points) and the post PTSD scores showed the most dramatic decrease of all groups – averaging a 15-point drop, with one youth dropping 27 points). Guest speakers provided workshops to educate court staff, community mental health providers, educators, and law enforcement on the role of trauma in understanding delinquent behavior. Over 17 school social workers were trained in the school based trauma group curriculum to be implemented in the 2016-17 school year at the middle school.

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**Marion, Ohio 43302**  
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**[kclark@co.marion.oh.us](mailto:kclark@co.marion.oh.us)**