

Yoga 4 Change Correctional Program Evaluation Chartrand Fund Preliminary Findings – Mid-Year Report

#### Introduction

This research brief provides initial midpoint data from an evaluation of Yoga 4 Change's correctional programming in Duval County. The study is supported by a grant from the Chartrand Family Fund and represents a collaboration with Boston University.

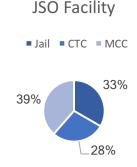
#### Yoga 4 Change

Yoga 4 Change (Y4C) is a nonprofit organization that offers a novel low-cost, healthy way to treat trauma and improve mental and physical health, by integrating physical movement (e.g., body forms/shapes) with thematic teachings (e.g., forgiveness, self-acceptance, vulnerability). These teachings are specifically developed for incarcerated individuals, among other underserved populations. This approach breaks down barriers and confronts emotional and physical limitations, while providing tools that help students reconstruct their thinking so they can focus on how to move through their past and start contributing to society.

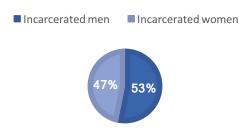
### Context

The current study evaluates curriculum as offered to men and women incarcerated at the Community Transition Center, the Montgomery Correctional Center, and the Pre-Trial Detention Center in Duval County. The study began in February 2018 and current data represent preliminary findings from start through June 2018. The study will continue through the end of 2018.

# **Program Characteristics**



## **PARTICIPANTS**



### **Quantitative Findings**

The results of statistical analyses comparing pre and post assessment of multiple validated scales indicated positive improvements; across-the-board Yoga 4 Change is making a positive impact on participants' strengths and well-being.

### **Coping Skills**

Results showed a *highly statistically significant increase* in participants' use of healthy coping skills, which indicates that participants respond to adversity with healthier behaviors after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

### Health

Results showed a *statistically significant improvement* in participants' health, which indicates that participants are more mentally and physically healthy after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

### Sleep

Results showed a *highly statistically significant increase* in participants' use of healthy coping skills, which indicates that participants respond to adversity with healthier behaviors after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

#### **Forgiveness**

Results showed a *statistically significant increase* in participants' levels of forgiveness, which indicates that participants are more forgiving after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

## Compassion

Comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scale scores indicated that participants' levels of compassion are increasing, but not to a statistically significant degree.

### **Self-compassion**

Results showed a *highly statistically significant increase* in participants' levels of self-compassion, which indicates that participants show themselves more compassion after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

#### **Emotional Awareness**

Comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scale scores indicated that participants' levels of emotional awareness are increasing, but not to a statistically significant degree.

#### **Emotional Regulation**

Results showed a *highly statistically significant increase* in participants' levels of emotional regulation, which indicates that participants are better able to regulate their emotions after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

#### **Anxiety**

Results showed a *highly statistically significant decrease* in participants' levels of anxiety, which indicates that participants experience less anxiety after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

### **Anger Management**

Results showed a *statistically significant increase* in participants' levels of anger management, which indicates that participants are better able to manage their anger after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

### **Post-Traumatic Growth**

Results showed a *highly statistically significant increase* in participants' levels of post-traumatic growth, which indicates that participants experience more positive growth in response to highly stressful or traumatic life events after attending six weeks of Yoga 4 Change programming.

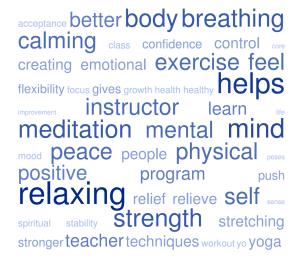
#### **Summary**

Overall, quantitative results are promising and indicate significant improvements in mental, physical and emotional well-being after participation in the Yoga 4 Change curriculum. Students demonstrate increased healthy coping strategies, are sharing these tools with others, and are more socially connected. As the number of participants in the study increases, it is likely that results will be even stronger.

### **Qualitative Findings**

### Program strengths

Participants discussed multiple strengths of the Yoga 4 Change curriculum, describing programming in the following ways:



### What are participants saying?

When asked how they have changed in response to programming, participants discussed being more relaxed and in balance. They cited a new capacity to feel calm and at peace. Participants described decreased stress and increased physical strength and flexibility.

"I've come out of my shell. Anxiety is reduced, more confident."
"I can identify my feelings and I can place them and release them."
"I have definitely learned a lot about myself through my yoga experiences. Yoga has truly helped me to be able to stop, breathe and think through stressful, and angry situations during my incarceration."
"I've learned more about the technical poses and proper way to do them. But I've also learned how to breathe and bring some of this good energy back with me."

Participants described sharing yoga with peers and with their families. Some indicated that they have attempted to recruit others to come to the program and have brought programming back to their units. Many discussed wanting to continue practice after release.

"I have shared everything I could from discussions to moves with anybody that would listen."

"I show several girls in the dorm poses and we do a body scan in my room at night before going to sleep."

Overall, when asked for feedback, participants asked for more programming. Participants also cited the strength of the Yoga 4 Change teachers.

"Thank you for allowing me to participate and change my way of thinking and ultimately change my life."