

# The Choice Is Yours

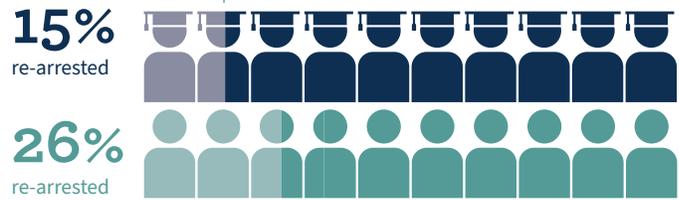
Launched in February 2012, **The Choice Is Yours (TCY)** is a one-year alternative to trial and sentencing for first-time, non-violent drug offenses. Through employment, education, community service, and life skills activities, TCY has successfully supported young adults in re-orienting their lives.



## TCY GRADUATES ARE ALMOST HALF AS LIKELY TO BE RE-ARRESTED

**WITHIN 1 YEAR OF GRADUATION**

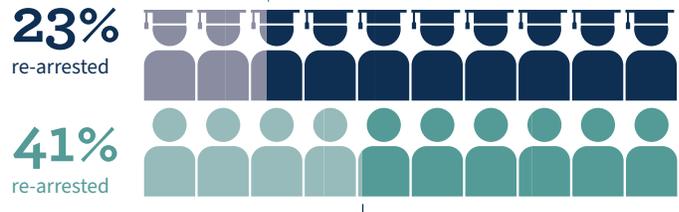
TCY Graduates



Comparison Group\*

**2 YEARS POST-GRADUATION**

TCY Graduates



Comparison Group\*

\*McClanahan & Associates/Urban Institute (2015) report, quasi-experimental comparison group of similar young adult offenders who would have been eligible for TCY.

Less than 17% of TCY graduates had a felony conviction five years post-program.

After 7 years, 73% of a comparative non-TCY cohort had been re-arrested.\*\*

\*\*Comparative non-TCY cohort is made up of individuals who failed TCY orientation or declined to participate in the initial TCY cohort.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

**82%**  
program graduation rate

**74%**  
of participants employed during the program

*“They give us opportunities that we would never have had in our entire lives. I would not have gotten my diploma this year if not for TCY. I’d probably be in jail if it wasn’t for TCY. It’s taught me so many things since the first day I’ve been here.”*

—TCY Participant

*“Once the weight [of a criminal record] is off, nothing is holding you back now.”*

—TCY Participant

## BENEFITS TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Provided savings to the City budget through reduced incarceration rates.

Improved judicial system workflow by removing low-level cases, giving the court time to focus on more serious cases.

Helped shift justice system leaders’ perception of diversion programs.

*“I think prior to other reforms, it paved the way to prove that diversion didn’t need to be just for misdemeanors. And while this is still nonviolent drug-related offenses and not so-called violent crimes, it was the beginning of the bridge to think about alternatives to incarceration more broadly.”* —TCY Partner

# What Makes The Choice is Yours Successful?

## STRUCTURE



### Orientation

Long and structured orientation sets clear expectations and allows for personal relationships to develop.



### Flexibility

Significant judicial discretion in applying program rules takes into account each participant's life circumstances and builds trust while still holding the participant accountable.

## APPROACH



### Person-centered

Participants are provided with individualized wraparound services (education, employment, housing, financial management, childcare, etc.).

*"...our staff all now have been trauma informed trained. And instead of us, when we sit down with our clients, setting goals and mapping out objectives to reach the goal, we want to find out what's going on with the whole client, the entire client."*

—TCY Staff

## FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS & DEEP RELATIONSHIPS



### Formal partnerships between justice system actors

Formal partnerships with the District Attorney's Office, Defenders Association of Philadelphia, and Municipal Court outline a shared vision and detailed roles and responsibilities.



### Deep relationships between staff and participants

Staff are encouraged to develop deep relationships with participants, assisting them in weathering emerging challenges.

*"It's a family...that's the best word."* —TCY Participant



### About JEVS

JEVS Human Services *Makes Hope Happen* for nearly 30,000 individuals throughout the Delaware Valley each year. Through innovative skills training, job readiness and career services, vocational rehabilitation, recovery services, and adult residential and community participation services, JEVS helps participants achieve their highest quality of life, realize their goals, and live lives with dignity.



### About Equal Measure

In 2019, JEVS partnered with Equal Measure, a national evaluation and strategy firm, to conduct an evaluation of TCY's effectiveness. The information in this brief is drawn from the evaluation's final report.

Find this and other TCY documents on the web at  
<https://www.jevshumanservices.org/the-choice-is-yours/>