

# Summary and Conclusions

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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# Summary and Conclusions

## Brief Summary of the NEW VISTAS program

The NEW VISTAS program incorporated a family-focused, neighborhood-based supervision model to provide services to families who have been involved with the law, have identified substance abuse problems, and live in the City of Santa Barbara. NEW VISTAS is a comprehensive service-delivery model that is composed of five critical service needs for families with substance abuse problems: (1) Family-focused and Neighborhood-Based Supervision, (2) Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services, (3) Support Services, (4) Gender-Specific Services, and (5) Neighborhood Enhancement Programs.

Using a collaborative service-delivery and supervision model, NEW VISTAS addressed five priorities of the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice System. In particular, NEW VISTAS aimed to (1) maximize use of existing resources (2) provide a carefully planned drug and alcohol treatment program with a family-focused system of care, (3) develop gender-specific assessments and programming across the juvenile justice continuum, (4) test the efficacy of neighborhood outreach services and neighborhood-focused restorative justice programs, and (5) maximize the use of local out-of-home placements with a lower Rate Classification Level (RCL) rather than out-of-county placements.

Participants ( $n = 352$ ) were 241 male (68%) and 111 female (32%) adolescents and their families. Of the youths, 81% were Latino American, 14% were European American, 3% were African American, and 1% were American Indian. At intake, the ages of participants ranged from 11 to 18 years old, with 78% of the youths between 15 and 17 years of age.

## Effects within the Targeted Neighborhoods

One of the goals of NEW VISTAS was to reduce crime in the targeted neighborhoods. To evaluate trends in crime over time, arrest data were acquired from the Santa Barbara Police Department database and probation data were collected from the Santa Barbara County Probation Department mainframe. In terms of juvenile arrests, data indicated that quarterly rates fluctuated dramatically over time and few stable trends were evident prior to or during the evaluation period. Thus, support for a systematic program impact on juvenile crime was lacking. However, when examining more specific trends related to probation violations, monthly averages decreased significantly throughout the NEW VISTAS program, supporting the conclusion that NEW VISTAS reduced subsequent criminal activity of youths who had previously committed an offense. Analyses of adult offending patterns revealed that the mean number of monthly arrests increased from the last quarter of 1999, reaching a seven-year high by the third quarter in 2001. Though arrests subsequently decreased, this trend was not significant. The majority of arrests were for new violations. When examining parole violations for adults, there was some fluctuation over time but in no clear direction. Thus, there is no evidence to suggest that criminal activity of adults who had committed a previous offense decreased during the implementation of NEW VISTAS.

**NEW VISTAS incorporated a family-focused, neighborhood-based supervision model to provide services to families who have been involved with the probation system and have drug and alcohol abuse problems.**

**Though overall juvenile arrest rates did not decrease through NEW VISTAS implementation, probation violations did.**

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In addition to examining data from the Police Department database and Probation Department mainframe, a community policing questionnaire was administered to more than 400 community residents each Fall from 1999 through 2001 in order to assess residents' perceptions of safety and public protection over time. In contrast to the arrest data, the majority of findings indicated that reported awareness of criminal activity by residents within their neighborhoods decreased over the three year NEW VISTAS implementation period.

A particular focus of the NEW VISTAS program was to reduce juvenile crime related to alcohol and drug offenses, which constitute a significant proportion of all juvenile arrests. When examining arrest trends related to drug and alcohol offenses, the number of arrests fluctuated between 2000 and 2003 with no significant variation from year to year. Overall, the data do not support a significant decrease in drug and alcohol offenses during NEW VISTAS within the entire City of Santa Barbara.

The community policing questionnaire also included information related to residents' sense of safety. These data demonstrated that satisfaction with neighborhood quality of life increased each year though increases were not statistically significant. In addition, residents' level of fear decreased slightly from 1999 to 2000, but increased slightly in 2001. Though the change in level of fear over time was significant, a clear decreasing trend was not present. In terms of public protection, satisfaction with police activities increased throughout the NEW VISTAS intervention period, and differences approached statistical significance. With regards to probation activities, satisfaction remained relatively stable across the three data collection periods.

## Effects within the Targeted Families

Multiple assessments were administered to the LEM subsample of NEW VISTAS participants in order to better understand NEW VISTAS' impact on family functioning. Results are reported for those youths who successfully completed program requirements and are summarized in the paragraphs below. Overall, data yield mixed support for program impact in comprehensively improving broad levels of family functioning in NEW VISTAS participants. However, many findings did demonstrate significant improvements in functioning in specific areas, particularly when examined separately by gender.

The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire measured levels of positive parenting, inconsistent discipline, and poor monitoring. Both parents and youths completed these measures in order to provide information from multiple perspectives. In terms of positive parenting, levels remained fairly stable from intake to exit according to caregiver reports and male youth reports, and significantly increased according to female youth reports. In terms of inconsistent discipline, levels remained fairly stable from intake to exit according to caregivers of males, but decreased significantly according to caregivers of females. Levels of inconsistent discipline remained relatively stable according to youth self-reports. In terms of poor monitoring, levels significantly decreased from intake to exit

**Reported awareness of criminal activity by community residents decreased.**

**Juvenile arrests for drug and alcohol related offenses varied between 2000 and 2003 without significant decrease.**

**Community residents' sense of safety, satisfaction with quality of life, and satisfaction with police and probation activities increased over time.**

**BOC =  
Board of Corrections**

**LEM =  
Local Evaluation  
Measures**

**Evaluating several measures of family functioning yielded mixed support for program impact on family functioning.**

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according to caregivers of females and male self-report but remained stable according to caregivers of males and female self-report.

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale-II measured levels of family adaptability and cohesion. For both family adaptability and family cohesion, more youths and caregivers reported balanced levels at exit than at intake, though results did not reach statistical significance.

The Parent-Adolescent Communication Survey measured levels of open communication and problem communication. The majority of caregivers reported favorable levels of open communication at both intake and exit. The proportion of youths reporting high levels of open communication increased for both males and females from intake to exit. Increases in reports of open communication were significant for caregivers of male and female youths. Levels of problem communication remained stable from Intake to Exit for all reports except caregivers of females, who reported significant decreases in problem communication from Intake to Exit.

The Parenting Stress Index, completed only by caregivers, measured levels of stressful life events experienced that may contribute to adverse family functioning. Caregivers of both males and females reported decreases in levels of parenting stress by program exit. Decreases reported by caregivers of males were statistically significant.

As a comprehensive service designed to treat families with substance use problems, one of the primary goals of the NEW VISTAS program was to reduce drug and alcohol use among targeted families. For youths who had alcohol problems at intake, 90% of those who successfully completed program requirements did not have problems at exit, in contrast to 39% of youths in the historical comparison control group. For youths who had drug problems at intake, 91% of those who successfully completed the program did not have drug problems at exit, in contrast to 28% of youths in the historical comparison group. In addition, treatment planner ratings of NEW VISTAS youths' needs for alcohol and drug treatment decreased significantly between intake and exit.

Some parents of youths involved with NEW VISTAS had drug and alcohol problems as well. Specifically, about 23% of fathers and 17% of mothers had substance abuse problems at intake. Parent substance use and substance behaviors measures were used to evaluate changes in drug and alcohol problems from intake to exit. However, parents' self-reports of drug and alcohol abuse were too low to allow for meaningful analyses.

As a family-focused model, NEW VISTAS also aimed to reduce the initiation of criminal activity among non-probation juveniles in targeted families. Approximately 18% of NEW VISTAS youths lived with siblings who were on probation, parole, or incarcerated. The Child Behavior Checklist was completed by the LEM subsample of caregivers involved with NEW VISTAS in order to provide data regarding change in delinquent and aggressive behaviors through NEW VISTAS program implementation. Results indicated that both delinquency and aggression behaviors decreased from intake to exit. These trends were not statistically significant, which was likely affected by the relatively small sample size.

**More youths and caregivers reported favorable levels of family adaptability and cohesion at exit than intake.**

**Caregivers reported improvements in levels of parenting stress by program exit.**

**Parent reports of sibling behavior problems decreased from intake to exit.**

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One of the goals of NEW VISTAS was to reduce the percentage of juveniles among the targeted families under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Services who subsequently enter the Juvenile Justice system. However, data were not available to examine whether or not this goal was accomplished.

Another goal of NEW VISTAS was to improve rates of completion of probation restitution and court-ordered community services among targeted juvenile offenders. Of the relatively few youths who were assigned to probation restitution, 100% of youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS completed restitution. In contrast, only 46% of the Historical Comparison Group completed restitution requirements, which is a statistically significant difference. Of those who were assigned community services, 63% of youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS compared with 37% of the Historical Comparison Group completed community service requirements, which approaches statistical significance.

NEW VISTAS also aimed to reduce the rate of out-of-home placements among juvenile offenders in the targeted families. Youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS had significantly fewer noninstitutional out-of-home placements (0%) than youths in the Historical Comparison Group (16%). In addition, youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS had significantly fewer institutional commitments (27%) than youths in the Historical Comparison Group (48%).

Recidivism is a key indicator of probation intervention success. Rates of offending were collected by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. The average number of arrests per youth during the intervention period was significantly lower for youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS (1.39) than youths in the Historical Comparison Group (2.02), and youths who failed to complete NEW VISTAS (3.35). Follow-up data provided information regarding long-term recidivism rates. At the 6-month, 12-month, and 18-month follow-up periods, arrest rates were significantly lower for youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS (.26, .11, and .10, respectively) than youths in the Historical Comparison Group (.79, .54, and .31, respectively).

NEW VISTAS aimed to reduce the problem behavior of target youths. Data were collected through school records and The Child Behavior Checklist, which was administered to the LEM subsample of NEW VISTAS youths and their parents. School problem behaviors of the youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS program requirements indicated that the percentage of youths who had been suspended decreased from intake to exit, a difference that approached statistical significance. Expulsions also decreased from intake to exit. However, this decrease was not significant as percentages of youths who were expelled at either time period was too low. For both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, youth and caregiver reports each decreased from intake to exit. These differences were significant for caregiver reports of males and females and female youth report.

**When compared to youths in the historical comparison group, more youths who successfully completed NEW VISTAS completed assigned probation restitution and community service.**

**Fewer NEW VISTAS youths were referred to out-of-home placements than youths in the historical comparison group.**

**Though rates of recidivism were similar for NEW VISTAS and historical comparison youths during the intervention, rates were significantly lower for these NEW VISTAS youths at 6- and 12- month follow-up periods.**

**Externalizing and internalizing behaviors of NEW VISTAS target youths decreased from intake to exit.**

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In addition to decreasing problem behaviors, the NEW VISTAS program sought to enhance the behavioral and emotional strengths of participating youths. Data regarding school behaviors were collected through Santa Barbara School District records. In addition, multiple assessments were administered to the LEM subsample of NEW VISTAS participants to collect additional relevant data. Overall, data provided strong support for program impact in improving broad levels of behavioral and emotional strengths.

School data were collected to examine attendance and grades. Though the majority of NEW VISTAS youths had attendance problems at intake, attendance problems significantly decreased from intake to exit. In addition, the percentage of youths receiving average or above average grades increased significantly from intake to exit.

The California Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment measured levels of caring relationships, high expectations, meaningful participation, social competence, and autonomy and sense of self from the youth's perspective. In examining caring relationships, 58% of youths' scores increased from intake to exit, though mean score differences were not significant. For high expectations, 61% of youths' scores increased from intake to exit, and mean score differences were significant. Analyses of meaningful participation, indicated that 62% of youths' scores increased from intake to exit, and mean score differences were significant. On the social competence indicator, 64% of youths' scores increased from intake to exit, and mean score differences were significant. Finally, for autonomy and sense of self, 59% of youths' scores increased from intake to exit, and mean score differences were significant.

The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale measured levels of interpersonal strength, family involvement, intrapersonal strength, school functioning, and affective strength. For interpersonal strength, mean scores increased from intake to exit for caregiver and youth reports. This increase was significant for female self-report. Analysis of family involvement indicated that mean scores increased from intake to exit for caregiver and youth reports. This increase was significant for caregiver and youth report of female behavior, but not for caregiver or youth report of male behavior. For intrapersonal strength, mean scores increased from intake to exit for caregiver and youth reports. This increase was significant for both male and female self-reports, as well as for caregiver report of males. Mean differences from intake to exit of caregiver report of female intrapersonal strength approached significance. Analyses of school functioning, revealed that mean scores increased from intake to exit for caregiver and youth reports. This increase was significant for caregiver reports of males and females and female self-report. Finally, for affective strength, mean scores increased from intake to exit for caregiver and youth reports. However, these increases were not significant.

**Data regarding behavioral and emotional strengths demonstrated increases from intake to exit across a variety of measures.**

**Grades and attendance improved significantly.**

**Levels of high expectations, meaningful participation, social competence, autonomy, and sense of self increased significantly from intake to exit.**

**Levels of interpersonal strength, family involvement, intrapersonal strength, school functioning, and affective strength improved from intake to exit.**

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## Effects within the Local Juvenile Justice System

To evaluate the improvement of collaboration between partner agencies involved in NEW VISTAS, the Interagency Collaboration Survey was administered to staff from all NEW VISTAS partner agencies each Spring of 2001, 2002, and 2003. Overall, the majority of respondents reported favorable perceptions of interagency collaboration throughout the evaluation periods. Additionally, mean staff ratings of interagency collaboration increased over time, though this increase was not statistically significant. In terms of satisfaction with interagency collaboration, responses were largely favorable. These ratings increased significantly over time, which indicates that levels of interagency collaboration increased throughout the NEW VISTAS program. Responses to questions regarding perceived levels of challenges of collaborating with other NEW VISTAS partner agencies indicated slight improvement in challenges between 2001 and 2002 followed by an increase in perceived challenges during 2003. However, mean differences between staff ratings of challenges over the three-year period were not significant. In terms of NEW VISTAS professionals' level of comfort raising difficult issues for discussion during collaborative meetings, ratings increased over time, though this increase was not significant. Finally, staff responses to open-ended questions suggest relative declines in challenges and increases in positive aspects over the course of program implementation.

NEW VISTAS also aimed to improve service delivery within the juvenile justice system by increasing the accountability of service providers. To do so, the LEM subsample of NEW VISTAS youths and their parents were asked to complete satisfaction questionnaires. Responses indicated that 86% of youths reported "liking" to "somewhat liking" NEW VISTAS services, 85% of youths reported that they got the help they wanted, 73% of youths reported that they did not need more help than they received, 61% reported that they were given more help than they needed, 83% of youths reported that NEW VISTAS services helped them with their lives, and 82% reported favorable levels of satisfaction with NEW VISTAS services and personnel. In terms of caregivers' satisfaction with NEW VISTAS services, 80% of caregivers rated the quality of NEW VISTAS services as either "good" or excellent, 79% of caregivers reported that "most" to "almost all" of their needs were met upon completing NEW VISTAS, 85% of caregivers reported feeling "mostly" to "very satisfied" with services they received, 87% reported receiving a favorable amount of services, and 88% reported satisfaction with NEW VISTAS services and would refer a friend, if needed.

In order to provide a systematic assessment of drug and alcohol use, a goal of the NEW VISTAS evaluation was to implement a standardized alcohol and drug assessment. The Adolescent Addiction Severity Index (AASI) was implemented. The AASI is a semi-structured interview designed for use by paraprofessionals with substance dependent clients for the purpose of evaluating drug and alcohol treatment outcomes.

**Partner agency professionals reported favorable perceptions on many dimensions of interagency collaboration.**

**Most participating youths and their parents reported satisfaction with NEW VISTAS services.**

**The Adolescent Addiction Severity Index was implemented in order to evaluate response to drug and alcohol treatment.**

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The NEW VISTAS project also sought to develop a gender-appropriate assessment of risks and strengths. The Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment (SB ARA) was created by UCSB Research Team members in order to provide an assessment that would take into consideration important, yet neglected areas in risk assessment development. The SB ARA advances assessment practices by incorporating assets, addressing a broad spectrum of relevant domains, considering gender differences, and providing information about outcome prediction and treatment allocation. The SB ARA is a semi-structured interview conducted with youths and their families targeting 56 indicators selected to provide information about important assets and risks. Preliminary psychometric analyses demonstrate good reliability and validity. Pilot studies highlight the strength of the SB ARA to predict recidivism for both females and males.

NEW VISTAS specifically sought to provide effective services across cultural groups, establishing key program elements in order to maximize cultural competence with interventions. In order to examine the relative impact of the NEW VISTAS program on Latino Americans, analyses were conducted to compare Latino American and European American youths on indicators of change in behavioral problems and strengths. Overall, results indicated that outcomes improved significantly for both groups, particularly with regards to behavioral problems. However, not as many behavioral strengths improved for Latino Americans as for European Americans.

Even when youths share a common ethnic background, their responses to their environment may be mediated by their acculturation status. Acculturation is the degree to which youths' behaviors and values incorporate the majority culture. In order to understand program impacts within the group of Latino Americans involved with NEW VISTAS, the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II was implemented. Analyses indicated that though outcomes improved for all groups, Mexican American youths who were Anglo oriented in their language use and cultural behaviors had significant increases across more dimensions than youths who were Mexican or bi-culturally oriented.

Though national violence and criminal offense trends are decreasing overall, rates for girls have been increasing. In addition, females have been relatively neglected in the literature with regards to offending patterns and treatment efficacy for juvenile delinquency. Thus, NEW VISTAS also specifically sought to provide effective services for both males and females, establishing gender appropriate aspects to interventions. Analyses indicated that behavioral and emotional outcomes improved significantly for both males and females, particularly with regards to problem behaviors. Amongst strength behaviors, areas of improvement differed somewhat by gender, which is consistent with literature that suggests gender differences in experiences between males and females involved with the juvenile justice system.

**The Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment was developed in order to augment risk assessment and treatment allocation practices.**

**NEW VISTAS programs were implemented with cultural differences of participating families in mind.**

**Analyses indicated that most outcomes improved significantly for both groups.**

**Evaluating acculturation, data revealed that outcomes improved for all Mexican Americans, though more outcomes improved for Mexican Americans who were Anglo versus Mexican oriented.**

**Analyses indicated that outcomes improved significantly for both males and females.**

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## Summary of the Analyses Examining Each Hypothesis

The following list provides a summary of the analyses examining each hypothesis.

	Accomplished	Progress	Remains	
1. Juvenile crime will decrease.			✓	<p><b>Accomplished</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.</p> <p><b>Progress</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.</p> <p><b>Remains</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.</p>
a. Monthly arrests			✓	
b. Probation referrals	✓			
c. Parole violations	✓			
d. Property crimes	✓			
e. Crimes against persons	✓			
2. Adult crime will decrease.			✓	
a. Monthly adult arrests			✓	
b. Reported crime activities	✓			
3. Juvenile alcohol and drug-related offenses will decrease.				
a. Monthly juvenile arrests		✓		
b. Probation referrals		✓		
4. Neighborhood residents sense of safety and public protection will increase.				
a. Reported satisfaction and quality of life	✓			
b. Reported levels of safety in neighborhood	✓			
5. Residents satisfaction with law enforcement will increase.				
a. Reported satisfaction with police	✓			
b. Reported satisfaction with probation	✓			
6. Levels of family functioning will increase among targeted families.				
a. Positive parenting		✓		
b. Inconsistent Discipline	✓			
c. Poor Monitoring/Supervision		✓		
d. Family adaptability		✓		
e. Family cohesion		✓		
f. Family communication	✓			
g. Problem communication	✓			
h. Parenting stress	✓			

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	Accomplished	Progress	Remains	
7. Alcohol and drug use will decrease among targeted families.				<p><b>Accomplished</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.</p>
a. Targeted youth addiction severity	✓			
b. Parent substance abuse behaviors			✓	
8. Initiation of criminal activity among non-probation juveniles in targeted families will decrease.				<p><b>Progress</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.</p>
a. Delinquency behaviors of siblings		✓		
b. Aggression of siblings		✓		
9. The percentage of juveniles among the targeted families under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Services who subsequently enter the Juvenile Justice System will decrease.				<p><b>Remains</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.</p>
a. Percentage of youths			✓	
10. The rate of successful completion of probation restitution and court-ordered community services among targeted juvenile offenders will increase.				
a. Completion of probation restitution	✓			
b. Completion of community service	✓			
11. The rate of out-of-home placements among juvenile offenders in the targeted families will decrease.				
a. Rates of out-of-home placements	✓			
b. Rates of institutional commitment	✓			
12. Rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders will decrease.				
a. Rates of recidivism	✓			
b. Rates of probation violations	✓			
c. Number of serious offenses	✓			
13. Problem behaviors of juvenile offenders will decrease.				
a. School misbehavior	✓			
b. Externalizing behaviors	✓			
c. Internalizing behaviors	✓			

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	Accomplished	Progress	Remains
14. Behavioral and emotional strengths of juvenile offenders will increase.			
a. School behavior (grades & attendance)	✓		
Youths' perception of			
b. Caring Relationships		✓	
c. High Expectations	✓		
d. Meaningful Participation	✓		
e. Social Competence	✓		
f. Autonomy	✓		
Parents' perception of			
g. Youth's Interpersonal Strength	✓		
h. Youth's Family Involvement	✓		
i. Youth's Intrapersonal Strength	✓		
j. Youth's School Functioning	✓		
k. Youth's Affective Strength		✓	
15. Collaboration among private and public agencies will increase.			
a. Overall success of collaboration	✓		
b. Quality of collaboration	✓		
c. Satisfaction with collaboration	✓		
d. Awareness of collaborative services	✓		
e. Reduction of challenges in collaboration	✓		
16. Accountability of service delivery will increase.			
Parent report of satisfaction			
a. Overall satisfaction	✓		
b. Amount of help received	✓		
c. Kind of services received	✓		
d. Positive recommendation	✓		
e. Helped in life	✓		
Youth report of satisfaction			
f. Overall satisfaction	✓		
g. Amount of help received	✓		
h. Kind of services received	✓		
i. Positive recommendation	✓		
j. Helped in life	✓		
k. Professionals cared about me	✓		
l. Quality of the services	✓		
m. Met individual needs	✓		

**Accomplished** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.

**Progress** indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.

**Remains** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.

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Accomplished Progress Remains

- 17. A standardized alcohol and drug assessment will be developed and implemented.
  - a. Adolescent Addiction Severity Instrument ✓
- 18. An assessment tool for identifying levels of criminal risks and needs for female offenders will be developed and implemented.
  - a. Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment ✓
- 19. A range of services will be developed to meet the needs of a diverse population, considering gender and culture.
  - a. Services will be effective for clients at varying levels of acculturation status ✓
  - b. Services will be effective for both males and females. ✓

Overall, the results of the research examining the effectiveness of the NEW VISTAS program indicate that the majority of the program objectives were successfully accomplished. The data yielded evidence providing support for fifty-five of the sixty-nine specific hypotheses. The data also provide valuable information regarding areas that warrant further consideration and strategic services to address the needs of the youths and families in the community.



**Accomplished** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.

**Progress** indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.

**Remains** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.