**Feasibility & Effectiveness of A Brief Motivational Intervention**

**for Justice-Involved Youth**

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Background: Juvenile offenders who use substances are at an increased risk for problematic substance use that persists into adulthood. Interventions that are effective in community settings or long-term juvenile justice settings may not be well suited for implementation in short-term juvenile detention facilities. “Free Talk” is a six-session motivational interviewing group that has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing substance use among youth who are at risk of developing substance use problems.

Objectives: The current study aims to evaluate the feasibility of implementing “Free Talk” in a short-term juvenile detention facility and outcomes associated with participation.

Method: 49 youth detained in a juvenile detention facility participated in “Free Talk” over five weeks. Motivation was assessed at each session using the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA).

Results: There was a significant difference between motivation at the first session (M=6.94, SD=2.49) and at the last session (M=5.78, SD=2.82); t(19)=3.375, p<.01. Although motivation decreased overall, descriptive statistics revealed that average baseline substance use scores were higher for those who endorsed increases in motivation than those who endorsed unchanged or decreased motivation.

Discussion: Motivation decreased overall, but results indicate that individuals with higher levels of baseline substance use experienced greater increases in motivation. Implementation challenges included inconsistent youth availability during sessions, variable time allotted for sessions, and limited availability of trained staff to lead groups. Although “Free Talk” may need to be adapted for feasibility of implementation, “Free Talk” may be effective in increasing motivation for pre-adjudicated youth with high levels of substance use.