

ROCA YOUNG WOMEN FY2025 SUMMARY REPORT

YOUNG WOMEN AT THE CENTER OF URBAN VIOLENCE EXPERIENCE HIGH LEVELS OF COMPLEX TRAUMA, VIOLENCE, TRAFFICKING, AND MULTISYSTEM INVOLVEMENT.

ROCA'S INTENSIVE INTERVENTION SHOWS STRONG INITIAL EVIDENCE OF IMPROVING THESE YOUNG WOMEN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND STABILIZING THEIR LIVES— PARTICULARLY IN AREAS OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE, MENTAL HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, AND BENEFIT UPTAKE.

Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) of Tufts University shares interim findings from their three-year evaluation of Roca's work with highly-traumatized young women.

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INTRODUCTION

With support from Roca, our evaluation team at [Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research \(TIER\)](#), Tufts University conducted a multi-year mixed methods implementation and outcomes evaluation of Roca Young Women’s programming. The evaluation aims were as follows:

- **Implementation**—focused on describing and understanding (1) the unique characteristics, risks, and challenges of Roca participants; (2) the ways in which participants use Roca’s services; and (3) Roca’s unique model and approach to service delivery.
- **Outcomes**—assessed Roca participants’ core outcomes using both Roca and state administrative data.

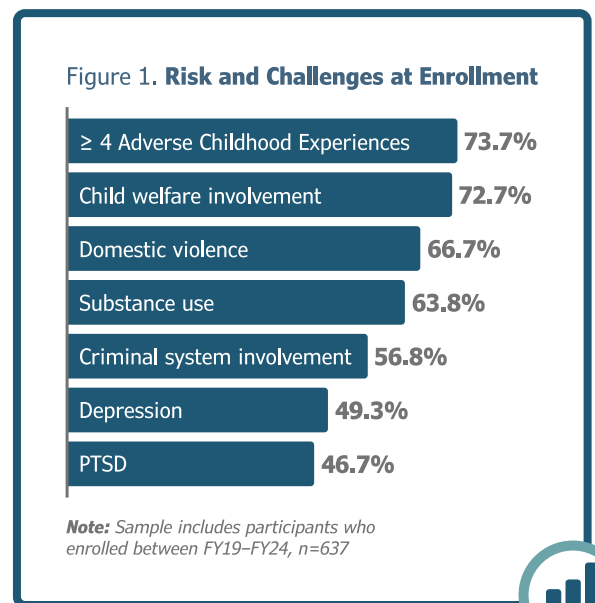
This report provides highlights across the implementation and outcomes evaluation, focusing on analyses of Roca data from FY19–FY24 and an initial look at some of the indicators from the state administrative data.ⁱ

THE YOUNG WOMEN

Using Roca data from FY19–FY24, this section summarizes young women’s risks and challenges at enrollment highlighting findings from two briefs focused on young women experiencing trafficking and complex systems involvement.

Risks and Challenges at Enrollment

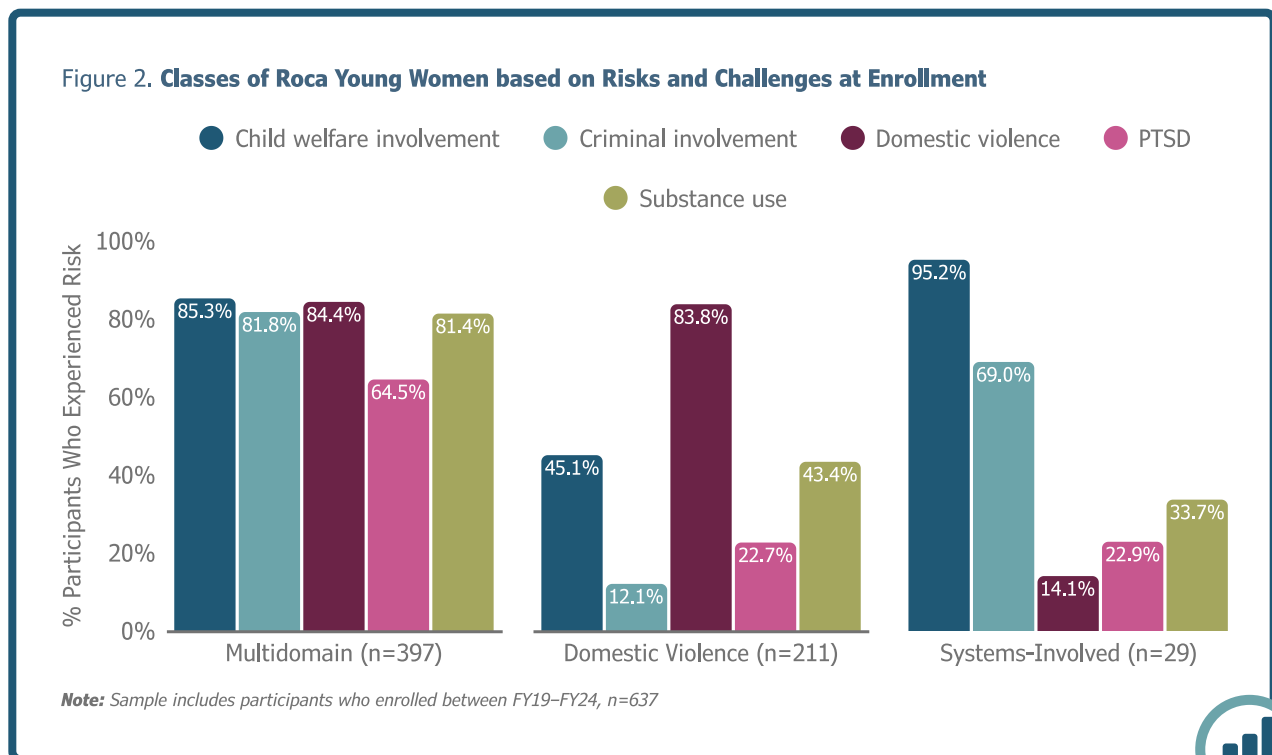
Roca Young Women enrolled 637 participants between FY19–FY24. Almost all (94%) identified as Black, Latina, or mixed race and ethnicity, and 77.1% were young mothers. All experienced poverty; 60% had no employment history and 36.5% experienced housing instability at enrollment. Around two thirds or more of young women entered the program with experiences of childhood trauma and exposure to domestic violence, most have high rates of involuntary systems involvement either currently or historically, and half or more experienced behavioral health challenges, including substance use, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at enrollment. See Figure 1.



ⁱ See Appendix A for the data sources used in this evaluation and a full summary of state administrative data received to date.

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) is a statistical method that groups diverse participants into “classes” or common groupings based on select variables. We ran an LCA using the risk and challenges at enrollment shown in Figure 1.ⁱⁱ

The LCA revealed that most participants (62.3%) were classified by high levels across all variables indicating they experienced most of or all the risks and challenges at enrollment—*multidomain*. A third of participants (33.1%) were classified by high levels of domestic violence with moderate levels of child welfare involvement and substance use—*domestic violence*. A small group of participants (4.6%) were classified by high levels of systems-involvement and moderate substance use—*systems-involved*. See Figure 2.



Special Populations

To better understand how Roca Young Women supports its unique population, TIER developed two briefs focused on special populations served by the program: young women who experienced human trafficking and young women who experience complex systems involvement. Here is what we learned.

ii We removed ACES and depression from the LCA since these are newer measures and the sample sizes are quite small.

Human Trafficking

In 2024, Roca Young Women identified that about a third of its participants experienced some form of human trafficking. Most of these young women were gang-involved and victims of sex trafficking, and increasingly, labor trafficking; many did not identify themselves as victims of human trafficking. They were most likely to fit into the *multidomain* class described above, defined by histories of extensive systems involvement, domestic violence, trauma, and substance use.

Based on the literature, we identified guiding principles and practices for victims of human trafficking and areas and aligned them with Roca's approach.^{1, 2, 3} See below.

How Roca Supports Young Women Who Have Experienced Human Trafficking

Safety and Stabilization. Make participants feel physically and emotionally safe and address their immediate basic needs. Relentless Outreach and Connection. Build collaborative relationships with participants by being transparent and trustworthy, and understanding that challenging behaviors are adaptations (often self-protective) to trauma.

Emotional and Behavioral Regulation. Support participants to develop key competencies including how to cope with their emotions, build healthy relationships, and develop a positive sense of self and future orientation.

Navigation. Use multifaceted programming focused on safety, mental health, agency and empowerment, physical health, substance use, family relationships, and economic self-sufficiency; and train frontline workers in related systems including law enforcement, hospitality, transportation, and juvenile justice to recognize and identify potential victims.

Transformation. Promote participants' empowerment including autonomy and decision-making.

 [Learn more here](#)



Roca integrated a trafficking screener into the updated Change Assessment, which will enable more thorough monitoring and assessment of this emerging population of young women.

Complex Systems Involvement

TIER conducted a small study focused on Roca participants experiencing complex system involvement—the participants who are deeply systems-involved in either or both the child welfare and criminal systems and encounter barriers to making substantive progress on their cases. The first phase of the study included interviews with staff and community partners and analysis of Roca data.

Drivers of Complex Systems Involvement

Interviewees described several drivers of complex systems involvement for the young women.

- Young women may be uniquely vulnerable to systems involvement due to the regulation and criminalization of behaviors that stem from their experiences of poverty, trauma, and exposure to violence.
- The demands of the system make it hard for young women to make progress. Action plans and expectations are often unobtainable or unrealistic due to unmet basic needs or unavailable or inaccessible services.
- Due to a lack of effective advocacy modeling and past experiences, young women feel silenced or penalized when they speak up or advocate for themselves.

They also described how Roca supports young women experiencing complex systems involvement. Roca works multiple levels—policy, community, and program—both to reduce the reach and mitigate the impact of involuntary systems involvement on young women’s lives. Here is how:

- Roca **addresses policies** that increase the likelihood of systems involvement in young women’s lives or prevent young women from making meaningful progress. Roca interfaces with policymakers and senior officials at state agencies and public systems to advocate for more equitable and aligned policies and procedures and to connect siloed systems and sectors.
- Roca **builds community relationships** to enable young women to navigate systems. They help remove barriers and connect young women to community services and supports to meet their basic needs and promote well-being. They provide case management in collaboration with case workers, probation officers, and other providers.
- Roca provides **intensive one-to-one mentorship**, programming, and support to young women. They aim to stabilize young women, help them feel safe, and promote healthy relationships and connections to services and supports; teach and model critical emotional and behavioral regulation skills; and provide opportunities for practicing skills and demonstrating agency to help shift behaviors that lead to systems involvement or prevent progress.

Snapshot of Systems Involvement Outcomes

Using Roca program data and state administrative data for participants who enrolled in FY23–FY24, analyses **revealed sizable declines in participants' systems involvement**—both child welfare and criminal system—after participants enrolled in Roca compared to before.

- 71.2% of Roca participants were involved with child welfare prior to Roca enrollment, compared to **4.9% who had a new report after enrolling in Roca**. Among Roca participants with children, 51.5% were involved with child welfare for their child prior to Roca enrollment, compared to **24.0% who had a new report after enrolling in Roca**.
- 43.0% of Roca participants experienced at least one arraignment prior to enrolling in Roca, compared to **14.5% after enrolling in Roca**.

Further assessment of these outcomes is a priority for the next phase of the evaluation.

***Note:** Sample includes participants who enrolled between FY23–FY24, n=264; n=171 had at least one child. Child welfare information from Roca records and the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. Arraignment information from the Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services Criminal Offender Record Information; n=186 who consented to share state agency data.*



THE PROGRAM

We examined Roca program data to understand how young women utilize the program including staff engagement and program attendance. We also explored the timing and reasons for discharge.

Program Engagement

Roca Young Women is an intensive program, with recommended weekly staff contact and program attendance. Here we describe trends in staff contact and program attendance, focusing on the 396 women in our sample who were enrolled for at least 12 months by the end of FY24.

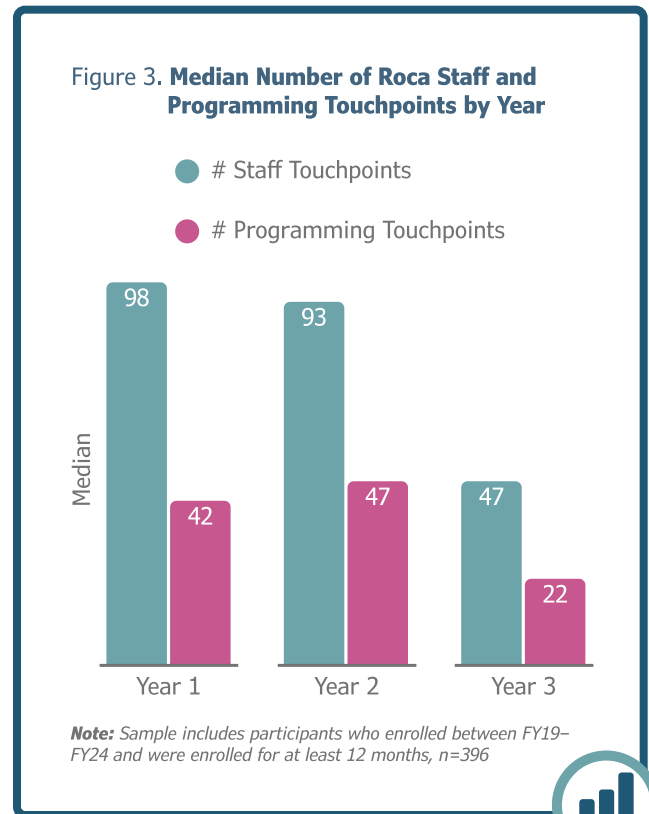
Dosage

As seen in Figure 3, on average, Roca participants received more than 90 staff touchpoints and more than 40 programming touchpoints in each of the first two years of the program. Almost all participants (94.5% Year 1, 93.1% Year 2) met weekly targets for staff contact, with about half meeting the target for program attendance (52.3% Year 1, 57.5% Year 2).

To further understand the variability in program dosage, we conducted a second LCA to group participants into different “classes” based on their patterns of staff contact and program attendance using quarterly data over the first two years of enrollment. For each quarter, high staff contact was defined as receiving 80% of expected staff contacts (>10 per quarter) and high program attendance as 50% of expected program attendance (>6 per quarter).

The LCA revealed three classes:

- **High program engagement**—31.6% of participants (n=125) had high levels of staff contact and program attendance; participants in the domestic violence class at enrollment were most likely to be in this class.
- **Moderate program engagement**—44.4% of participants (n=176) exhibited moderate staff contact and program attendance over the first two years of the program; participants in the multidomain class at enrollment were most likely to be in this class.
- **Low program engagement**—24.0% of participants (n=95) exhibited low staff contact and program attendance.



Program Receipt

Participants most frequently attended Rewire CBT (cognitive behavioral theory), Healthy Habits, and education programming.

Roca staff also engaged in third party contacts for participants—nearly seven contacts in the first two years of the program, primarily with probation officers and child welfare supervisors. Young women who are systems-involved were most likely to have third party contacts made on their behalf.

Discharge

Roca Young Women continues to succeed in keeping participants engaged in the program. By the end of FY24, 296 young women discharged from the program—46.5% of our sample. On average, they were enrolled for just under 22 months ($M=21.77$, $SD=18.55$). The most common reasons for discharge included moving out of Roca service area (33.8%) and program completion (26.0%).

Based on current data, survival analyses revealed that half of Roca’s participants are predicted to remain in the program for the full 3 years. Engagement in Rewire CBT programming and practice decreased the likelihood of early discharge.

OUTCOMES

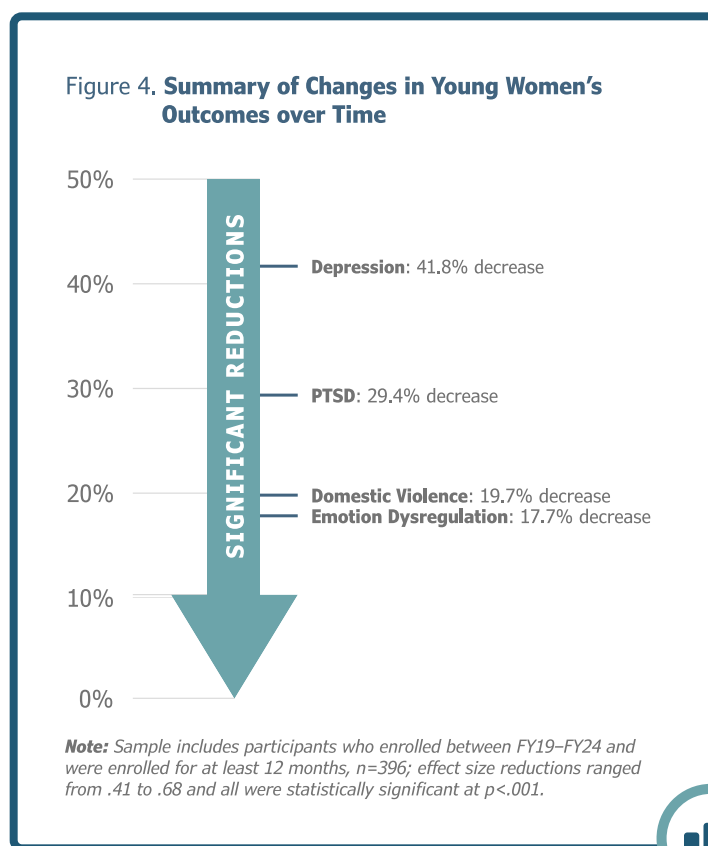
This section summarizes young women’s outcomes using data from Roca’s Change Assessment.

Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes

The Roca Change Assessment includes a series of measures that are completed upon program enrollment (“baseline”) and subsequently at 6, 12, 18, 24, and 36 months, including:

- **Emotion dysregulation**—Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)
- **Domestic violence**—Hurt, Insulted, Threatened with harm and Screamed at (HITS)
- **Depression**—Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)
- **PTSD**—PTSD Checklist for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fifth Edition (PCL-5)

Using available data for 396 young women who enrolled in Roca for at least 12 months, we examined shifts in Change Assessments scores from baseline to their most recent administration (8 months after enrollment, on average). As shown in Figure 4, there were significant reductions in each of the primary outcomes from baseline to follow-up, ranging from a 17.7% decrease in average emotion dysregulation to a 41.8% decrease in depression. These reductions are clinically significant, meaning that at follow-up, scores were well-below clinical cutoffs.^{4, 5, 6, 7} Higher levels of staff contact and program engagement were associated with observed declines in emotion dysregulation, domestic violence, and depression over time.



Snapshot of Economic Outcomes

Employment

Nearly 55% of Roca’s participants (54.8%) were employed at the time of their most recent change assessment. This represents a significant increase from baseline employment rates (47.6%).

Benefit Receipt

Among a subset of Massachusetts participants, we examined benefits receipt using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) records from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and Child Care Financial Assistance records from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.ⁱⁱⁱ Analyses revealed a **significant increase in benefits receipt after participants enrolled in Roca, compared to before enrollment:**

- **45.6% of Roca’s participants received SNAP and 35.1% received TAFDC** after enrolling Roca (vs. 33.9% SNAP and 25.7% TAFDC prior to enrollment)
- **66.7% of participants who were young mothers received subsidized child care** after enrolling in Roca (vs. 32.6% prior to enrollment)

ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on availability of state agency data, see Table A2 in Appendix A.



SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

- Roca Young Women continues to serve a unique population of 14- to 24-year-old women experiencing high levels of complex trauma, violence, and multisystem involvement.
- Roca offers intensive services—including one-to-one staff touchpoints and a range of programming. Most participants experience moderate to high levels of staff engagement.
- Roca participants experience moderate to large declines in emotion dysregulation, domestic violence, depression, and PTSD over time.
- Roca’s model demonstrates initial evidence of success in stabilizing high-risk young women’s lives—particularly in areas of employment, parenting support, and benefit uptake.
- The next phase of the evaluation will focus primarily on designing and conducting a quasi-experimental impact evaluation of Roca Young Women’s programming. Internal comparison groups will be created using variation in the level of exposure to the program (“dosage”) combined with statistical matching.

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DISCLAIMER

This work would not be possible without data provided by the Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and the P20 WIN participating agencies, and the Massachusetts Departments of Criminal Justice Information Services Criminal Offender Record Information, Early Education and Care, and Transitional Assistance. The findings do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the State of Connecticut or the organizations and agencies contributing data. This publication does not express the views of the JBCSSD or the State of Connecticut. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors.

APPENDIX A

Evaluation Data Sources

Table A1. Summary of Data Elements and Aims for the Roca Young Women Evaluation

AIM	PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION	ROCA DATA (EFFORTS TO OUTCOMES—ETO)			DATA SHARING
	Interviews & Focus Groups	Central Intake	Change Assessment	Program Data	State Administrative Data
The Young Women	✓	✓	✓		
The Program	✓			✓	
Outcomes	✓		✓		✓

State Administrative Data

After several years of negotiating agreements, we received the requested state administrative data. See Table A2 for a summary of data accessed.^{iv}

Table A2. State Administrative Data Availability for Roca Young Women

DATA		CT	MA
Mother			
Child Welfare	Reports and relevant dates and details of alleged child maltreatment including perpetrator, case opening and closure, allegation, substantiation, disposition from the Department of Children and Families (DCF—CT)	✓	
Criminal Records	Court records including offense type, disposition, and arrest date from Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JBCSSD—CT)	✓	
	Criminal Record Offender Information (CORI) including offense type, disposition, arraignment date, court information from Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS—MA)		✓
Education	Attendance, enrollment status, educational attainment, suspension and expulsion, and achievement test records from State Department of Education (SDE—CT)	✓	

^{iv} Consent forms to access administrative data were available for 63 young women in Connecticut and 270 in Massachusetts in FY24.

DATA		CT	MA
Public Benefits	Benefits records including monthly payments, dates, and sanctions related to receipt of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA—MA)		✓
	Benefits records including monthly payments, dates, and sanctions related to receipt of Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA—MA)		✓
Child ^v			
Child Care Subsidies	Records including dates related to receipt of Care 4 Kids (C4K) from the Office of Early Childhood (OEC—CT)	✓	
	Records including provider type and dates related to receipt of Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC—MA)		✓
Child Welfare	Reports and relevant details and dates of alleged child maltreatment including perpetrator, case opening and closure, allegation, substantiation, disposition, from the Department of Children and Families (DCF—CT)	✓	
Early Intervention	Referrals, evaluation for eligibility, and receipt of individualized family service plans (IFSP) of Birth to Three (Early Intervention) from the of Office of Early Childhood (OEC—CT)	✓	

^v Data were available for young mothers with consent forms.