

Effective Counseling Techniques Working with At-Risk Youth in Residential and Outpatient Settings

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Abstract : The problem of juvenile crime, school suspensions and oppositional behaviors indicates a need for a wide range of intervention programs for at-risk youth. Juvenile court systems and mental health agencies are examining alternative ways to deal with at-risk youth that will allow the adolescent to live within their home community. The previous trend that treatment away from home is more effective than treatment near one's community has shifted. Research now suggests that treatment be close to home for several reasons, such as increased treatment success, parental involvement, and reduced costs. Treatment options consist of a wide range of interventions, including outpatient, inpatient, and community-based services (therapeutic group homes, foster care and in-home preservation services). The juvenile justice system, families and other mental health agencies continue to seek the most effective treatment for at-risk youth in their communities. This research examines two possible treatment modalities, a multi-systemic outpatient program and a residential program. Research examining effective, evidence-based counseling will be discussed during this presentation. The presenter recently completed a three-year research grant examining effective treatment modalities for at-risk youth participating in a multi-systemic program. The presenter has also been involved in several research activities gathering data on effective techniques used in residential programs. The data and discussion will be broken down into two parts, each discussing one of the treatment modalities mentioned above. Data on the residential programs was collected on both a sample of 740 at-risk youth over a five-year period and also a sample of 63 participants during a one-year period residing in a residential programs. The effectiveness of these residential services was measured in three ways: services are evaluated by primary referral sources; follow-up data is obtained at various intervals after program participation to measure recidivism (what percentage got back into trouble with the Department of Juvenile Justice); and a more sensitive, "Offense Seriousness Score", has been computed and analyzed prior to, during and after treatment in the residential program. Data on the multi-systemic program was gathered over the past three years on 190 participants. Research will discuss pre and post test results, recidivism rates, academic performance, parental involvement, and effective counseling treatment modalities.

Keywords : at-risk youth, group homes, therapeutic group homes, recidivism rates

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