Studies show numerous benefits to mentoring. Mentoring at-risk youth often leads to: educate themselves, achieve their goals, change society for the better, and help. The mission of the REACH program is to help youth recognize opportunities, and post-tests.

Abstract

Although mentorship programs have been determined to be effective in promoting positive outcomes in youth and decreasing delinquency, there is a significant gap in the literature in terms of implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs within juvenile detention facilities. The aim of the study is to measure the effectiveness of the REACH Program using a mixed-methods and qualitative methodology within which the specific objectives of the Program are evaluated. The REACH curriculum is centered around four key program components: 1) Self-esteem enhancement, 2) Decision-making skills, 3) Thinking out loud as a release goal, and 4) Overall support in achieving their goals. By surveying each child to measure their individual responses to each of the four main program areas and at the end of the REACH program for a minimum of two weeks, the researchers have been able to determine the effectiveness of the program in providing youth with positive skills that decrease the risk of recidivism. This research project not only provides a template for an effective juvenile delinquency intervention program but also may alter the life of the youth who participate in the program. Successful implementation, evaluation, and promotion of the REACH Program may guide other detention facilities outside of Porter County with an effective model and curriculum that could be implemented within their own detention facilities in order to decrease recidivism rates and strengthen their communities as well.

Background Information

The mission of the REACH program is to help youth recognize opportunities, educate themselves, achieve their goals, change society for the better, and help others to do the same. The program offers a positive development experience for at-risk youth. Mentoring at-risk youth often leads to: Positive social and emotional, cognitive, and identity development. Youth, individuals, and communities benefit from the positive social and emotional, cognitive, and identity development by improving their self-esteem, decision-making skills, and understanding of post-release goals, and sense of support in working to achieve their goals.

Methods

- Paper pre-survey implemented before each resident began participating in REACH and paper post-survey implemented bi-weekly on Fridays
- Generalizable Population: Youth in Juvenile Detention Centers
- Target Sample: Youth in Porter County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC)
- Permissions: Program was approved and mandated by director of JDC and an assent form was provided to youth, giving them the option to have their data included in the study
- Challenges: Some youth were not able to complete the program due to early releases, phase losses, suspensions, or court hearings. Since the surveys were self-reported, the results are dependent upon participants’ mood, which can be influenced by external forces occurring both inside and outside of the juvenile detention center.

- Total Respondents: 80 youth, but 1 omitted for data analysis

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-test Mean</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am a person of worth</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have good skills</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel useful</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make things work</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have support</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Paired Samples T test depicting positive change in self-esteem and sense of support and negative change in decision-making skills between pre- and post-tests.

Table 2: Frequency table depicting over half of all REACH program participants reporting increased self-esteem, decision-making skills, understanding of post-release goals, and sense of support in working to achieve their goals.

Table 3: Correlations Table depicting correlations between variables (survey questions) and D-scores (difference between pre- and post-survey responses).

Conclusion

- At least half of all REACH participants reported improvements in their self-esteem, decision-making skills, understanding of their own goals, and sense of support in working to achieve their goals.
- Significant changes among five variables between participants’ pre- and post-surveys:
  - “I do things well”
  - “I am no good”
  - “I think before acting”
  - “I have support”
  - “I do not have support.”

References