

# The Evaluation of the REACH Program in Juvenile Detention

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## Abstract

Although mentorship programs have been determined to be effective in promoting positive outcomes in youth and in 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 our study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the REACH program, a violence prevention and delinquency intervention curriculum which the researchers implemented from September through December 2019 within the Porter County Juvenile Detention Center. The REACH curriculum is centered around four key program components: 1) Self-esteem enhancement, 2) Decision-making skills, 3) Setting post-release goals, and 4) Sense of support in working to achieve their goals. By surveying each child to measure their individual responses to each of the four main constructs before and after their participation in 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 their risk of recidivating. This research project not only provides a template for an effective juvenile delinquency intervention program but also may alter the life course of the youth who participate in the program. Successful implementation, evaluation, and promotion of the REACH program may provide 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.

- Hypotheses:**
- 1) Youth will report higher self-esteem after participating in the REACH program while in detention
  - 2) Youth will report improved decision-making skills after participating in the REACH program while in detention
  - 3) Youth will report a better understanding of their own educational and career goals after participation in the REACH program while in detention
  - 4) Youth will report a stronger sense of support as they work toward achieving their goals after participating in the REACH program while in detention

## 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.

Mentoring at-risk youth often leads to:

- Positive social and emotional, cognitive, and identity development
- Youth developing positive views of themselves
- Reinforcement of prosocial actions and positive identity development (Kelley, 2018)

Studies show numerous benefits to mentoring

- Study of at-risk youth showed youth who experienced negative outcomes while being mentored were less likely to become labeled delinquent (Miller et al., 2013)

Significant gap in terms of mentorship programs within juvenile detention centers

- Few to no studies available (Dappen et al., 2006)

- 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' moods, which can be influenced by external forces occurring both inside and outside of the juvenile detention center.
- **Total Respondents:** 30 youth, but 1 omitted for data analysis

## Methods

## Results

Variable	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	D Score	P Value	t-Score
I do things well	2.1	2.48	0.38	0.048	2.073
I am no good	1.89	2.03	0.14	0.03	2.3
I think before acting	2	1.62	-0.38	0.046	2.091
I have support	2.14	2.34	0.2	0.048	2.073
do not have support	1.56	1.97	0.41	0.012	2.696

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.

Self-Esteem		
Yes	14	56%
No	11	44%
Decision-Making		
Yes	15	57.70%
No	11	42.30%
Goals		
Yes	13	52%
No	12	48%
Support		
Yes	13	50%
No	13	50%

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.

Pretest Variable	Difference Variable
Am a person of worth (9)	(d12)
Have good qualities (10)	(d2)
Satisfied with self (11)	(d12, d15, d18)
Wish I had more self-respect (12)	(d4, d11, d12, d13, d19)
Feel useless (13)	(d5, d10)
Do things as well as others (14)	(d1, d8, d12, d14, d16)
Have little to be proud of (15)	(d12, d13, d17)
Am no good at all (16)	(d12)
Find small problems difficult (18)	(d8, d12, d19)
Small problems difficult (19)	(d10, d11, d18)
Regret decisions after acting (20)	(d12, d18, d18)
Think before acting (21)	(d1, d13)
Have a dream job (22)	(d14, d15)
Know steps to take for career (23)	(d14, d15, d19)
Have people to support me (24)	(d14, d16, d18, d20)
Not optimistic about future (25)	(d3, d5, d8, d17)
Know where to find help (26)	(d18, d20)
Do not believe I have support (27)	(d12, d19)
Feel I will achieve my goals (28)	(d19, d20)

Correlations Table Label Key		
Pretest Variable Number	Survey Question	Difference Variable Number
9	I feel that I am a person of worth.	1
10	I have a number of good qualities.	2
11	Overall, I am satisfied with myself.	3
12	I wish I had more respect for myself.	4
13	I feel useless at times.	5
14	I do most things as well as other people.	6
15	I feel I have little to be proud of.	7
16	Sometimes I think I am no good at all.	8
17	I have a positive attitude toward myself.	9
18	I find small problems difficult to solve.	10
19	I evaluate different solutions to problems.	11
20	I sometimes regret decisions after acting.	12
21	I think before acting.	13
22	I have a dream job/career.	14
23	I know the steps I must take before I can work in	15

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/or 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."
- 51 correlations between variables (survey questions) and d-scores (differences between pre- and post-survey responses).
  - Participants who reported low self-respect on pre-test had increased likelihood of reporting increased benefits after participating in the REACH program.

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