Abstract

Although mentoring programs have been determined to be effective in promoting positive outcomes in youth and/or decreasing delinquency, there is a significant gap in the literature on the implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs within juvenile detention facilities. The aim of this study is to measure the effectiveness of the REACH Program, an evidence-based mentoring and delinquency intervention curriculum designed to decrease recidivism and improve the life outcomes for youth in the juvenile detention system. The REACH curriculum is centered around four key program components: (1) Youth interventions, (2) Decision-making skills, (3) Setting post-release goals, and (4) Sense of support in working to achieve their goals. By surveying each at-risk child in the Porter County Juvenile Detention Center, the REACH program while in detention, we were able to measure the program’s impact on positive outcomes in self-esteem, decision-making skills, understanding of post-release goals, and sense of support in working to achieve their goals. Significant changes among five variables between participants’ pre- and post-surveys were reported, with the likelihood of reporting increased benefits among five variables between participants’ pre- and post-survey responses.

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 (PCJC)
- Permissions: Program was approved and mandated by director of JOC 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 factors occurring both inside and outside of the juvenile detention center.
- Total Respondents: 30 youth, but 1 omitted for data analysis

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

Studies show numerous benefits to mentoring:

- Study of at-risk youth showed youth who experienced negative outcomes while being monitored were less likely to become labeled delinquents (Miller et al., 2013)
- Significant gap in terms of mentorship programs within juvenile detention centers
- Few to no studies available (Dappen et al., 2006)

Results

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-surveys.

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/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”

- Participants who reported low self-respect on pre-test had increased likelihood of reporting increased benefits after participating in the REACH program.

References


