LESSONS LEARNED IN THE TRANSITION OF YOUNG OFFENDERS TO COMMUNITY SETTINGS

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“I will need help] making my own food and like just going outside, being in public, job applications... just simple things. They’re going to be hard... like even doing my own clothes, it’s going to be hard ’cause I haven’t done it in a long time.”

Unruh, et al., 2009

Family

I’ll need support from my family [when I get out]– for them to be stable enough so I don’t have to worry about other things like taking care of where I’m going to sleep, where I’m going to eat that night; just so I know that things are set and I won’t have to worry about those things.

Unruh et al., 2009

Peers

“Meeting up with your old friends, getting caught up again, you know. Kinda comes down to self-control though. If you have enough control to meet back up with them and try to be clean... the old people do the old behaviors. I think that will be hard.”

Unruh, et. al., 2009

Project STAY OUT Model:

Strategies Teaching Adolescent Young Offenders to Use Transition Skills

- Provision of facility-to-community transition services for incarcerated youth with disabilities (SPED or mental health disorder)
- Key staff person: Transition Specialist
- Works closely with POs, OVRs counselors, and other community agencies
- Interagency collaboration between schools, juvenile justice, behavioral health, vocational rehabilitation, Workforce Development, and other community agencies based on unique needs of youth

Essential Features of a “Reach-In” Service Delivery Model

- Individualized to Unique Needs of Youth
- Competitive Employment
- Flexible Educational Opportunities
- Targeted Social Skills Training
- Immediate Access to Age appropriate Support Services Driven by Unique Needs of Individual

(Bullis & Cheney, 1999)
Phases of “Reach-In” Service Delivery

- Immediate Pre/Post Release Services
- On-going Follow-up Services

Evaluation Model

- **Process**: Ongoing identification of barriers and supports to service model
- **Participant Outcomes**: Provides both formative and summative information

Demographic Information

- Average age at entry of participants is 17.4
- App. 81% of participants are male & 19% female
- App. 30% of participants represent an Ethnic Minority Status

Disability Status

- DSM-IV only 44%
- Both SPED & DSM-IV 48%
- SPED only 5%
- Unknown 3%

Barriers-to-Transition

- Participants averaged app. 8.5 barriers
- Approximately 75% of all participants reported history of:
  - Substance Abuse (79%)
  - Absenteeism/Suspension from School (79%)
  - Prior history of foster home placement (66%)
  - Running from Home/Residential Placement (65%)

Criminal History

- 65% of participants were adjudicated at 14 or younger
- Multiple crimes were committed by youth
- 1st offense was property-related (52%)
- 1st offense was person-related (40%)
Gender Differences

- Young women are more likely to possess the following barriers to transition:
  - History of Running Away from Home/Placement (2.79)
  - History of Suicide Risk (2.75)
  - History of Abuse (2.44)
  - Parenting Responsibilities (3.67)

- Young women are less likely to possess the following barriers to transition:
  - Have Learning Disability (5.08)
  - Retained a grade (3.11)
  - Unable to maintain job (2.82)
  - Have ADHD (2.98)

Primary TS Activities

Outcomes

Implications for Practice

- **Individual**
  - **Target:** Increase good decision-making/locus of control/self-regulation skills
  - **Intervention:** Access to continued Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and other identified mental health services in the community
  - **Intervention:** Develop youth’s self-determination and self-advocacy skills

- **Family/Living Environments**
  - **Target:** Improved familial emotional support
  - **Intervention:** Increased family and youth support services in the facility & community
  - **Intervention:** Ensure services are culturally appropriate
  - **Target:** Improved independent living skills
  - **Intervention:** Increased access to graduated Independent Living Programs upon release
**Implications for Practice**

**Peer Relationships/community**
- **Target:** Increased pro-social networks
- **Intervention:**
  - Natural supports may develop through new friend sets in school, vocational training, employment
  - Develop pro-social networks by engaging youth in healthy community activities related to interests, strengths, hobbies

**Education**
- **Target:** Increased rates of engagement in education
- **Intervention:**
  - Match education program to interests and academic needs of youth
  - Provide flexible educational opportunities (e.g., GED, training, high school completion)

**Employment**
- **Target:** Increased rates of employment,
- **Intervention:**
  - Develop targeted employment services (e.g., WIA, VR)
  - Job matching based on youth’s strengths/barriers to employment
  - Employment-related social skills

**Community Capacity Building**
- **Target:** Increase multi-agency collaboration
- **Intervention:**
  - Develop state and/or localized MOUs
  - Development & dissemination of Screening & Referral Process (e.g., sharing of information across agencies)
  - Education of ALL local partners
  - Regular planning meetings with multiple agencies
  - Use of formative evaluation data to review project services

**Questions?**