

Douglas County Juvenile Department

Outcome Summary

Today = Tomorrow

Extended Detention Program



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I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The mission of the Douglas County Juvenile Department is to promote public safety by holding youth accountable for delinquent acts, providing youth with opportunities to restore their victims and our community and offering reformation services to assist youth in becoming productive and responsible citizens. The department received over 1,200 referrals from law enforcement in '08.

The goals of the department's Today = Tomorrow program include to increase each youth's ability to identify and address individual risk behaviors and:

- For each youth to decrease the intensity of poor behaviors and/or law violations
- To develop each youth's competency and cognitive skills
- For each youth to successfully transition back into his or her own community.
- To give each youth an opportunity to avoid a more restrictive and prolonged setting.
- Based on the youth's individual needs, facilitate successful transitions to residential programs.

The Today=Tomorrow Program is located in the Douglas County Juvenile Detention Facility. The 30-day extended detention program is intended to serve up to eight youth, ages 12 to 17 years of age in a secure setting. The program is designed to address the issues of youthful offenders who are in need of a heightened level of intervention and supervision, based upon their unique score on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Risk Assessment tool—a reliable and validated instrument measuring youth recidivism risks.

The Today=Tomorrow Program is designed around an evidence-based cognitive-behavioral restructuring model—a model proven highly effective in effectively reducing juvenile recidivism. This model educates youth of the connection between their thoughts, attitudes, and emotions to their behaviors; to identify “thinking barriers” and substitute responsible thinking, and to increase pro-social thinking and skills through modeling and role-play practices. Each youth accepted into the Today=Tomorrow program is assigned a primary worker, who assesses the youth's individual needs based on the JCP Risk Assessment. An individualized service plan is created for each youth in the specific risk areas targeting Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs; Substance Use; Family Functioning, Behavior Issues, Peer and other Relationships, and School Issues. Each youth is given specific goals to strive for during their time in program. As needed, a Mental Health Therapist provides psycho-social assessments and a Substance Abuse Counselor provides Drug & Alcohol Assessments to facilitate placement and transition to residential programs after youth leave the Today = Tomorrow program.

The Today=Tomorrow program utilizes evidence-based curriculum, including Options to Anger, Thinking for a Change, SkillStreaming, and Charting a New Course. The Program provides approximately 100 hours of direct program treatment time to youth during their 30 day program. Additionally, youth attend school Monday through Friday,

have daily recreational activities, and, as applicable, also have weekly counseling sessions with a Mental Health Specialist, and/or weekly individual and group counseling with a Substance Abuse Counselor.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY:

Background – The Today = Tomorrow program is based on principles of effective practices regarding the use of cognitive behavioral interventions for high risk youth. This overview looks at, “To what extent does the program impact re-offenses?”

Sample – The sample includes youth referred to the program between 3/12/07 and 12/30/07. There were forty-eight youth who completed the program during this time.

- Average age is 16 years old
- 14.6% (7) females
- 85.4% (41) males

- 77.1% (37) Caucasian
- 4.2% (2) African American
- 6.3% (3) Latino
- 4.2% (2) Native American
- 8.3% (4) Unknown

Measurements and Analyses – Outcome measures for this study focused on the rate of change in criminal behavior. “Re-offense” rates are the primary outcome measurement for this study. Analyses of re-offense data include tracking one or more of the following:

- Percent With No New Referrals (Do Not Re-offend) – This is used in all analyses but is the primary outcome measurement for juveniles engaged in the early parts of the system.
- Percent With 1 or 2 New Referrals – These juveniles go on to commit one or two new referrals during the tracking time. They do continue in their delinquent behavior, but it does not become chronic.
- Percent Chronic Offenders – “Chronic” is defined as three or more new referrals during an identified follow-up period. It is the primary “system” or “decision point” measurement, e.g., when reviewing all juveniles referred to the Juvenile Department or referred to a specific division.
- **Percent Change In Recidivism** – This measurement is used to look at changes in criminal behavior before and after an intervention. It is the primary measurement at the program level for juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system. **This is the main measurement in this study.**

Evaluation Limitations – The review of changes in criminal behavior is important. It helps to ensure that the program does not “cause harm” as would be suggested with an increase in crime after the program. It cannot, however, conclusively be determined that reduction in crime is due to the program unless there is a comparison group.

III. FINDINGS

This review of the Today = Tomorrow program indicates a significant positive impact on participants. When looking at all youth with one year follow up time (N=48):

- 84.7% reduction in recidivism
- 2.75 average pre program criminal referrals and .42 post average post program criminal referrals
- The reduction is statistically significant

Youth with a two year follow up includes a rather small sample size at this point (N= 12). They experienced a 94 percent reduction in re-offenses (4.17 average pre program referrals and .25 average post program).

Cost / Benefit - Creating a method to evaluate cost efficiencies proved to be challenging. Cost avoidance is related to the cost of each re-offense, what is incurred with increases in juvenile crime, and what is avoided by reducing delinquency. National research studies have varied greatly on the cost per juvenile crime. Some studies have listed it as several hundred dollars while others describe it at millions per crime.

The rationale for the cost per re-offense in this study was established in 1995 in a single Oregon county with an inflation rate applied to it each year. It is based on a) an average cost to victims established by a national study, b) costs to the juvenile justice system including personnel, programs, utilities, training, supplies, etc., c) costs to law enforcement including making arrests and processing of juvenile crimes, and d) prosecution, defense, and court costs.

Based on this formula, the difference between the pre criminal referrals and the post referrals results in a cost avoidance of over \$472,000 after two years. This amount is “avoided” because criminal referrals decreased hence the cost associated with each referral is not incurred by victims, the juvenile justice system, law enforcement and the courts.

Program Costs – The program costs \$309,000 per year with 72 referrals in the most recent 12 months for a cost per youth of \$4,291. Considering the target population, the outcomes of this program yield a high rate of return on the investment by dramatically reducing the trajectory of costly chronic juvenile offenders.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Today = Tomorrow program indicates a significant positive impact on participants in reducing their criminal behavior. It is recommended to continue to track youth involved in the program to increase the number of youth in the study. In addition, it is recommended that a comparison group be identified and tracked for similar outcome measures.