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AUTHOR   Teare, John F.; Castrianno, Lynn M.; Novicoff, Carolyn D.;
                  Peterson, Roger; Authier, Karen; Daly, Daniel
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ABSTRACT
           This paper presents preliminary evidence for the
effectiveness of a model of care designed to provide safe and effective
services in both short-term shelter and short-term staff secure detention
programs. Boys Town short-term crisis shelter programs were designed to
provide a safe and therapeutic environment for homeless and runaway youth in
need of short-term crisis services. The program also offers a range of
short-term residential programs. A study involving more than 2,000 admissions
to these programs between January 1994 and July 1995 indicates that youth
from seven shelters demonstrated remarkable similarity in their profiles.
Youth problems included delinquent behavior, school problems, substance use
issues, out of control behavior, and mental health issues. Family stressors
were also identified and included substance use, criminal involvement,
parental marital problems, parental financial issues, and parental discipline
issues. Indicators of the success of the short-term residential and staff
secure detention programs included: (1) low occurrence of negative incidents,
including physical aggression, out of control behavior, runaway,
inappropriate behavior and suicidal gestures; (2) high participant
satisfaction; and (3) the percentage of youth reunified with their families.
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Replication of a Crisis Shelter Model of Care in Staff Secure Detention Programs

Authors

Introduction Method Results Conclusion References

Introduction

Historically, children have been placed in out-of-home care in alarming numbers. For example, between October 1985 and June, 1988, 102,000 youth in the US sought services in shelter care programs (US General Accounting Office, 1989). In 1990 alone, juvenile correctional facilities reported 98,000 admissions to long-term public facilities (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). As would be expected, youth who find themselves in these settings have a variety of service needs. This summary presents preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of a model of care designed to provide safe and effective services in both short-term shelter and short-term staff secure detention programs.

Initially, Boys Town's short-term crisis shelter programs were designed to provide a safe and therapeutic environment for homeless and runaway youth in need of short-term crisis services. Over time, the mission of the shelter program changed and evolved, and the program now provides a range of short-term residential programs. These programs serve youth with a variety of residential needs, including homeless/runaway youth, troubled youth in need of a short-term residential facility, and youth in need of a staff secure detention facility.

Most recently, efforts have focused on developing strategies to serve youth in need of staff secure detention facilities. Staff secure detention programs are short-term residential settings for youth awaiting adjudication, disposition, or placement. The term "staff secure" indicates that these facilities are not locked or guarded. Currently, Boys Town operates one program designated as a short-term, staff secure detention facility in Brooklyn, New York. This facility serves only males who are referred by Brooklyn's juvenile justice system. This program is designed to reflect a guiding principle within juvenile justice: Juveniles should be housed in the least restrictive placement alternative; this is true for both short-term and long-term placement (Snyder

& Sickmund, 1995).

Boys Town currently operates a total of eight shelter programs. In this summary, data obtained from over 2,000 admissions to these programs between January, 1994 and July, 1995 are presented. These programs are located in Brooklyn, NY; Los Angeles, CA; Oveido, FL; San Antonio, TX; New Orleans, LA; Las Vegas, NV; and Grand Island, NE. The eighth program in Washington, DC opened in August of 1995; there are no data from this site to report at this time.

Method

Youth from each of these shelters demonstrate remarkable similarity in their profiles. Our research indicated that youth are all about the same age (i.e., 14 years), and have similar problems&endash;both at the individual and family level. At intake, all youth were asked a series of 37 questions regarding problems they have experienced. Of these, 11 problems emerged as the most common youth problems across all seven sites. These youth problems were best characterized as delinquent behavior, school problems, substance use issues, out of control behavior, and mental health issues. A similar pattern was evident with family stressors, with 17 stressors out of 34 emerging as the most common across all seven sites. These stressors were best characterized as substance use, criminal involvement, parental marital problems, parental financial issues, and parental discipline issues. Youth also were administered the Achenbach Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach, 1991) at intake. Youth from all sites had similar YSR profiles. There was little variation among these profiles on any of the subscales or broad band scales, with none of the subscales or broad band scales approaching the clinical range. Relative to the other scales, the only subscale that showed a slight elevation was the Delinquent subscale. Although the Delinquent Behavior subscale was elevated across all sites, there was no variation among the sites on this dimension.

Results

Indicators of Program Success

One indicator of the success of these programs, both for short-term residential and staff secure detention, was the low occurrence of negative incidents as measured by an incident index. This index is comprised of 14 negative incident codes. Examples of these codes include physical aggression, out of control behavior, runaway, inappropriate behavior, suicidal gestures, etc. The average number of negative incidents per youth per length of stay ranged from 2.42 to 8.73, computed by taking the total number of incidents per site and dividing that number by the total number of youth per site. Broken down further, the average daily number of negative incidents ranged from .15 to .41, computed by dividing the average number of negative

computed by dividing the average number of negative incidents per site by the average length of stay. The average number of negative incidents per youth per stay was relatively low across all sites, including the NY site which houses youth in need of a staff secure detention facility. The background of the NY site's youth might lead one to expect this site to have far more negative incidents than the other sites. Although the NY site did have the greatest number of negative incidents (.41 per day), this rate was not inconsistent with the other sites.

Another indicator of program success was the results of the satisfaction survey completed by youth. At departure from the program, all youth were asked to complete a satisfaction survey. The survey is comprised of nine items and asks questions regarding the youths' satisfaction on the following dimensions: staff fairness; freedom to discuss problems with staff; staff concern for youth; staff pleasantness; staff's efforts with helping youth to get along with others; recreation activities; counseling; contact with family; and sharing opinions. An average Overall score was computed by collapsing the subscale scores across all dimensions. The scale was based on a 7 point Likert-type scale, with 1 = completely dissatisfied and 7 = completely satisfied. Survey results were consistently high across all sites, with overall scores ranging from 5.92 to 6.23. Satisfaction ratings across all dimensions were high across all sites indicating that youth reported that they were satisfied with the program, irrespective of the program's focus.

Placement data showing whether a youth was placed in another out-of-home setting or reunified with his/her family provided an additional indicator for program success. Data was obtained for every youth at departure regarding their placement upon completion of the program. The Restrictiveness of Living Environment Scales (ROLES; Hawkins, Almeida, Fabry, & Reitz, 1992) was used to categorize these placements (e.g., group home, county detention center, foster care, etc). The percentage of youth reunified with their families ranged from 23.1% to 78.1%.

Reunification appeared to be directly related to the purpose of the shelter site (i.e., whether the shelter functioned as a short-term residential placement or not). For example, sites which operated as short-term residential facilities had a fairly high rate of placing the youth with a parent or relative at departure (FL, NE, TX, & CA). The other sites had much lower placement rates with parents or relatives, which seemed to correspond to site-specific characteristics which impacted reunification for youth served. For example, the Louisiana site served a large population of youth who were homeless due to abandonment by their parents or to situations such as incarceration of a parent. Thus, reunification was not an option for these youth. Similarly, the NY site was used as staff secure detention for many youth on their way to a juvenile detention center. Although the reunification percentage in NY was low compared to the other sites (34.4%), it is worth noting that this percentage is

remarkably high given that these youth were being detained by the juvenile court awaiting adjudication.

Conclusion

In summary, these data suggest that a model of care developed for crisis shelter care can be replicated in geographically diverse locations with youth who have a variety of serious personal and family problems. These data also suggest that this model can be successfully implemented in short-term residential and staff secure detention programs.

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Authors

John F. Teare, Ph.D.
Director, Shelter & Hotline Research
Program Planning, Research,
& Evaluation
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-3357
Fax: 402/498-3256
tearej@BoysTown.Org

Lynn M. Castrianno, M.A., M.L.S.
Research Assistant, Shelter
& Hotline Research
Program Planning, Research,
& Evaluation
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-3358
Fax: 402/498-3256
castril@BoysTown.Org

Carolyn D. Novicoff M.S.
Eastern Regional Director
Boys Town USA
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-3261
Fax: 402/498-3256

Roger Peterson, M.H.D.
National Director, Emergency Shelter Services
National Training Center
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-1080
Fax: 402/498-1012

Karen Authier, M.S.W.
Director, Managed Care
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-3321
Fax: 402/498-3256

Daniel Daly, Ph.D.
Director, Program Planning, Research & Evaluation
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
13603 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010
Voice: 402/498-3350
Fax: 402/498-3256

Fax: 402/498-3256

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