

The Effectiveness of Service Integration: Studying the Crossover Youth Practice Model

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BACKGROUND

This study sought to examine the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), said to be the only existing practice model for serving crossover youth. Crossover youth are youth who have experienced maltreatment and have also engaged in delinquent activity. This is a broad definition to purposefully include youth who have experienced this duality regardless of whether the delinquency or maltreatment have come to the attention of the respective systems. The high rates of reoffending among cross-over youth is of concern given the high cost of providing services within the juvenile justice system. Crossover youth have higher rates of reoffending than delinquent youth without a history of child maltreatment. The CYPM was developed by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University as an innovative model for service integration. It provides a conceptual map and organizational ideology regarding how staff can partner with families, service providers, and other stakeholders in the delivery of services to achieve positive outcomes for crossover youth and their families. Miami-Dade County adopted the CYPM in 2010.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study expanded on the evaluation of the CYPM to use a quasi-experimental design with group assignment at the county level between Miami-Dade County (experimental group) and Palm Beach County (control group). In the qualitative section, all the participants in the study were informants who served crossover youth as practitioners or administrators in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. A key component of the CYPM is that informants participate in multidisciplinary team meetings. Participants were identified through observing multiple meetings. In the quantitative section, data were collected from administrative data from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Our Kids, and ChildNet, which included 86 crossover youth from Our Kids and 87 crossover youth from ChildNet.

KEY FINDINGS

Qualitative: Overall, the implementation of CYPM in Miami-Dade County showed several deviations from the guidelines. Although the administration never adopted CYPM, all parties in Palm Beach County involved in serving crossover youth, worked together to develop a procedure manual titled 15th Judicial Circuit Crossover Case Management (CCM) in 2012. Their crossover hearing is similar to the meetings in Miami-Dade County. Upon reviewing the manual, the authors found that the CCM provides more structured and specific guidelines for the participants to prepare for the crossover hearing as compared with the meetings in Miami-Dade County.

Quantitative: Results showed that crossover youth from Our Kids are associated with a lower risk of reoffending within a year than their peers from ChildNet, even after controlling for the confounding variables of demographics and prior offenses. This difference was not mediated by the juvenile justice processing but was mediated by receiving dental and medical services. Since the sample is all crossover youth from Our Kids served by the CYPM, the results indicate that the CYPM has the potential to reduce the risk of juvenile recidivism.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing collaboration between juvenile justice and child welfare agencies could reduce recidivism among crossover youth, particularly when youth receive timely medical and dental service referrals. Juvenile justice and child welfare agencies can work together to enhance their relationships with their network of treatment providers at both the state and local levels. The goal is for providers to understand the common childhood trauma experiences among crossover youth: the common diagnoses, their physical and behavioral health problems, and the consequence of not addressing the needs of the youth. Adopting the CYPM with a broad understanding of family engagement that includes both family members and adult mentors who are committed adults in the youth's life, could prove beneficial to reducing recidivism among crossover youth.