

What Works to Reduce Recidivism in Juveniles



How Did We Get Here?



Center for Juvenile Justice Reform
 • working across systems of care • georgetown university • gppi

Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs

A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Practice



Mark W. Lipsey • James C. Howell • Marion R. Kelly
 Gabrielle Chapman • Darin Carver

Pathways to Desistance

Substance Use and Delinquent Behavior Among Serious Adolescent Offenders

Edward P. Mulvey, Carol A. Schubert, and Louis Chassin

Highlights

- The Pathways to Desistance study followed more than 1,300 serious juvenile offenders for 7 years after their conviction. In this bulletin, the authors present some key findings on the link between adolescent substance use and serious offending.
- Serious/chronic offenders are much more likely than other juvenile offenders to be substance users and to qualify as having substance use disorders. Substance use and offending at one age is a consistent predictor of continued serious offending at a later age.
- Dispositional factors (e.g., sensation seeking, behavioral disinhibition, poor affect regulation, stress, depression) can lead to "externalizing" behaviors such as substance use and criminal activity.
- Substance use and serious offending fluctuate in similar patterns over time, suggesting a reciprocal or sequential relationship, but no causal relationship has been proven.
- Substance use and serious offending decrease in late adolescence. Understanding the factors that enable youth to desist from these behaviors as they learn new skills and mature may reveal avenues for intervention.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention ojjdp.gov

Levels of Research



- Lowest level of evidence
 - Anecdotal evidence (Gut feeling)
- Highest level of evidence
 - Empirical evidence (data based)
- Need to examine a body of literature
 - Literature reviews
 - Ballot counting
 - Meta-analysis
 - Quantitative review of the research
 - A standardized way of examining research

What Do We Know?



- Not a single study has found reductions in recidivism using punish-oriented programs.
- Punishment programs have actually made individuals (youth and adults) worse
 - Punishment does not “work” for those who have a history of being punished, are under the influence, or are psychopathic risk takers

What Do We Know?



- Majority of studies have shown that correctional treatment interventions have reduced recidivism rates relative to various comparison
- Average reduction in recidivism is approximately 10 percent
- Now looking at characteristics of stellar programs versus mediocre programs

What the Research Tells Us Works



1

- Validated assessment of risk/need is imperative to determine the best interventions. (Risk/Need Principles)

2

- Supervision strategies should correspond with the risk of recidivism. (Risk Principle)

3

- Programming and treatment designed to target criminogenic needs are necessary components of interventions. They should be theory-driven and based on current research. (Need/Treatment Principles)

4

- Individualize intervention strategies to increase the responsiveness of each youth. (Responsivity Principle)

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Risk of recidivism

Risk principle – use standardized and validated measures of risk/need to determine which youth should receive

Risk principle tells us WHO

Why is Classification/Assessment Important?



- Reduces bias
- Aids in legal challenges
- Helps better utilize resources
 - Guides decision making
 - Improves placement of youth
- Helps track changes of the youth
- Can lead to enhanced public safety

Common Problems with Assessment



- Assessment instruments not validated or normed to the local youthful population
- Youth are assessed then everyone gets the same level of programming
 - Put in the file and never used again
- Errors occur even with the most efficient instrument
- Choice of instrument does not reflect important organizational considerations

Major Risk Factors



- Antisocial attitudes
- Antisocial peers
- Antisocial personality
- History of antisocial behavior
- Family criminality and psychological problems in family origin
- Low levels of education/employment achievement
- Lack of participation in prosocial leisure activities
- Substance abuse

Antisocial Attitudes



- Criminal attitudes have central role in major theories of criminality
- Until recently, criminal attitudes have been virtually ignored in the mainstream assessment & treatment

Antisocial Attitudes



- Attitudes, values, beliefs, rationalizations, cognitions, negative cognitive emotional states that support criminal behavior
 - Rage
 - Anger
 - Defiance
 - Criminal identity
- What we think and believe affects what we do

Identifying Antisocial Attitudes: What to Listen For:



- Procriminal attitudes are what people think (the content of the message) and not how people think
- Negative expression about the law
- Negative expression about conventional institutions, values, rules, & procedures; including authority
- Negative expressions about self-management of behavior; including problem solving ability
- Negative attitudes toward self and one's ability to achieve through conventional means
- Lack of empathy and sensitivity toward others

Neutralizations and Minimizations



- Sets of verbalizations that serve to make it “ok” for behavior
 - Denial of Responsibility: Criminal acts are due to factors beyond the control of the individual, thus, the individual is guilt free to act.
 - Denial of Injury: Admits responsibility for the act, but minimizes the extent of harm or denies any harm
 - Denial of the Victim: Reverses the roles & blames the victim
 - “System Bashing”: Those who disapprove of the youth’s acts are defined as immoral, hypocritical, or criminal themselves.
 - Appeal to Higher Loyalties: “Live by a different code” – the demands of larger society are sacrificed for the demands of more immediate loyalties.

How to Address Antisocial Attitudes?



- Use programming and techniques that:
 - Identify antisocial thinking
 - Use thought blockers
 - Changing the antisocial thinking

Influence of Peers



- Elevated risk
 - Delinquent associations
 - Absence of prosocial associations
- Based on social learning
 - Learn through interaction of others
 - Provide reinforcements

Reducing Peer Associations



- Restrict associates
- Set and enforce curfews
- Ban hangouts

- Teach youth to recognize & avoid negative influences (people, places, things)
- Practice new skills (like being assertive instead of passive)
- Teach how to maintain relationships w/o getting into trouble
- Identify or develop positive associations: mentors, family, friends, teachers, employer, etc.
- Train family and friends to assist youth
- Set goal of one new friend (positive association) per month
- Develop sober/prosocial leisure activities

Antisocial Personality Patterns:



- Psychopathy
- Weak socialization
- Impulsivity
- Restless/aggressive energy
- Egocentrism
- Below average verbal intelligence
- A taste for risk
- Weak problem-solving
- Poor self regulation skills
- Hostile interpersonal interactions, lack of empathy

How Do We Address Antisocial Personality



- Skill based programs
 - Anger management
 - Impulse control
 - Decision making
 - Problem solving
 - Thinking skills

History of Antisocial Behavior



- The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior
 - Age of onset & escalation of offending
 - Variety of acts
 - Across settings
- 40% of serious offenders commit their first criminal offense by age 12
- 85% of serious offenders have committed an offense by age 14

Family Factors



- Include parental criminality and a variety of psychological problems in the family of origin
 - Low levels of affection, caring and cohesiveness
 - Poor parental practices
 - Recognition of antisocial behaviors
 - Parental supervision
 - Discipline (none or too much)
 - Neglect and abuse

Addressing Family Factors



- Family counseling to repair relationships
- Teach to recognize antisocial behavior
- Enhance supervision practices
- Enhance disciplinary practices

Education and Employment



- Employment or education occupies time with a prosocial activity
- Receiving rewards for participation in prosocial activity
- Interacting with prosocial others
- Factors include:
 - Low levels of personal educational/vocational achievement
- Cumulative disadvantage

Leisure & Recreation



- Low involvement in prosocial leisure and recreational activities
- “Idle hands”

Substance Abuse



- Activity is illegal itself
- Use may lead to other criminal behaviors
 - Theft/robbery to get drugs
 - Lower inhibitions “beer muscles”
- Buying drugs puts a person in contact with criminal others
- Selling/buying drugs usually creates an environment that is conducive to other criminal behaviors

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- Programming and treatment designed to target criminogenic needs are necessary components of interventions. They should be theory-driven and based on current research. (Need/Treatment Principles)

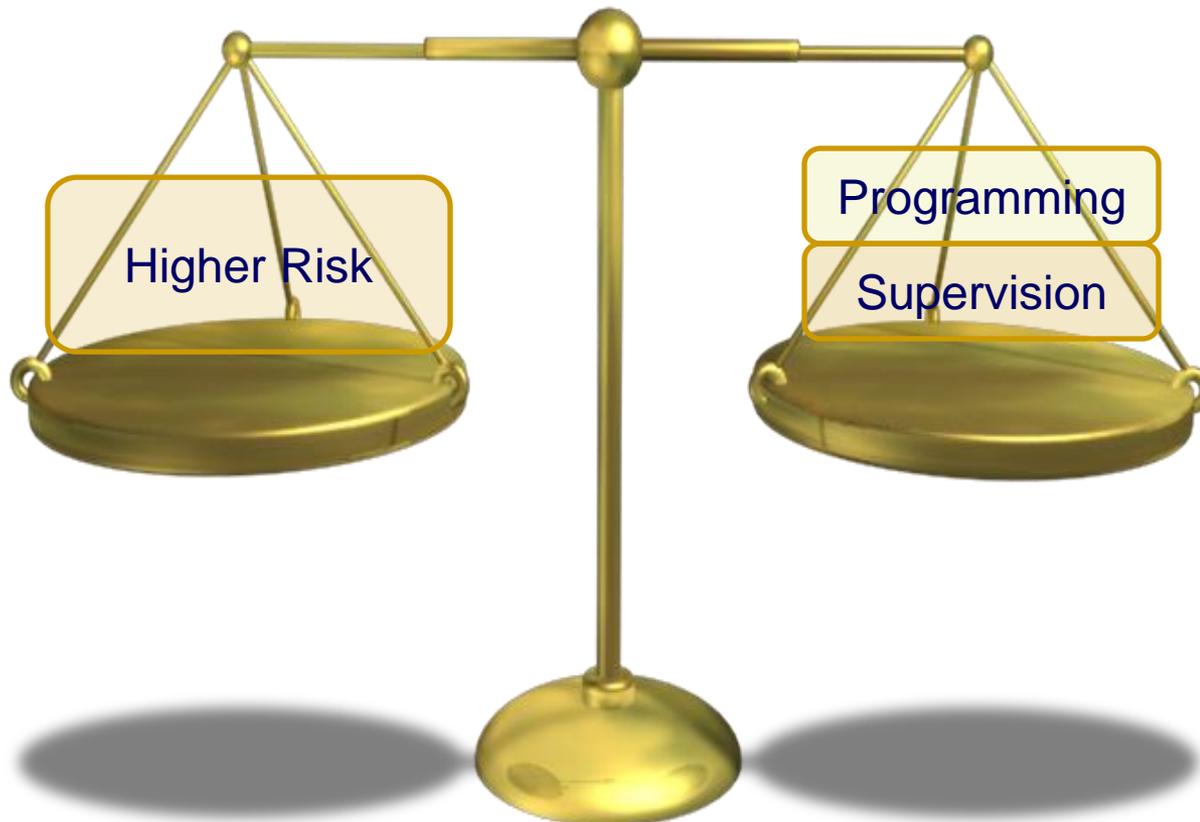
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- Individualize intervention strategies to increase the responsiveness of each youth. (Responsivity Principle)

Risk Principle in Action



Match risk level with supervision & programming



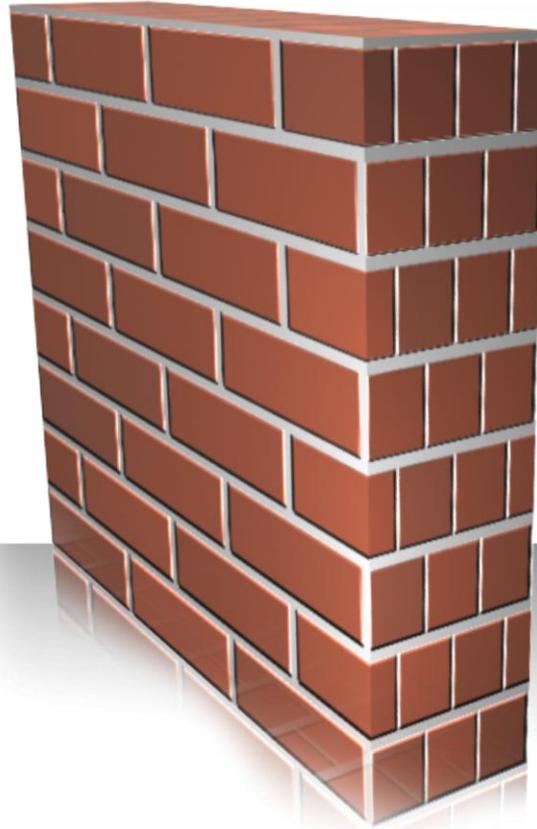
Juveniles with a higher risk for recidivism should receive more intensive services for a longer period of time

Juveniles with a lower risk for recidivism have fewer problems and do not require intensive services

Risk Principle In Action



Lower Risk Youth



Higher Risk Youth

Keep lower risk and higher risk youths separate in residential settings and in groups

Violating the Risk Principle



Youth at lower risk of recidivism being over supervised and over treated

Best option – no reduction in recidivism

Worst case – causing harm to the youth

Over treating and supervising disrupts the factors that make the youth at low risk of recidivism

Violating the Risk Principle



Youth with a higher risk for recidivism being under supervised and under treated

Violating the risk principle for higher risk youth results in increasing in recidivism

Not enough supervision /control to reduce behavior

Not enough intensity of programming to disrupt risk factors

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Need Principle

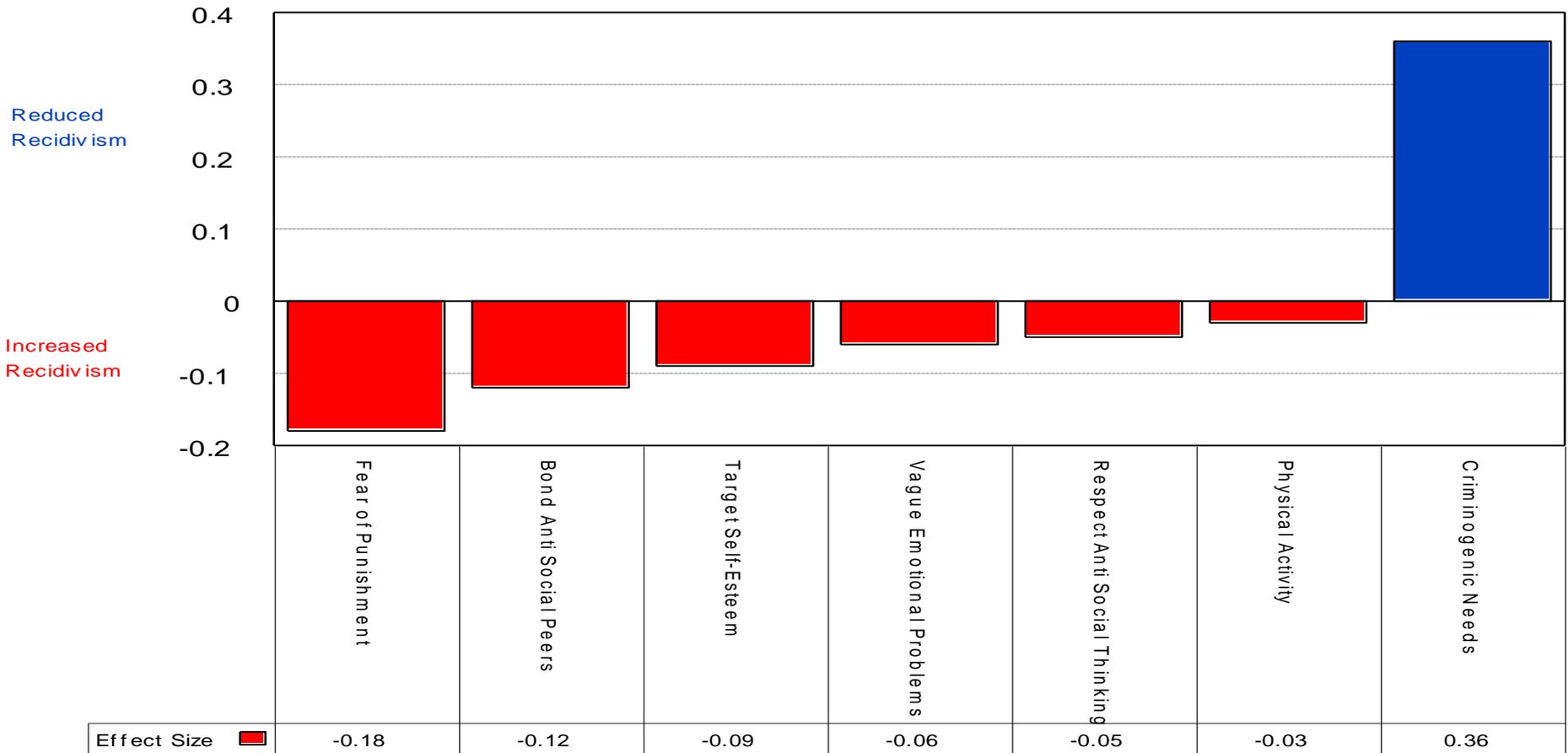


- Identify the criminogenic needs (dynamic factors related to the probability of recidivism)
 - Antisocial attitudes
 - Influence of antisocial friends/lack of prosocial friends/supports
 - Antisocial personality conducive to criminal behavior
 - Substance abuse
 - Family factors
 - Lack of educational/vocational attainment
- Provide programming to reduce these needs

Need Principle



Needs Targeted & Correlation with Effect Size for Youthful Offenders



The Human Service (Treatment) Principle



- Supervision alone will not change behavior
- Punishment programs are not effective in changing the behavior
- Must provide programming to meet the dynamic risk factors (criminogenic needs) that increase the probability of delinquency
 - Not all programming will benefit juveniles
 - Specific curriculum training and/or training in practices

Most Successful Types of Treatment Approaches

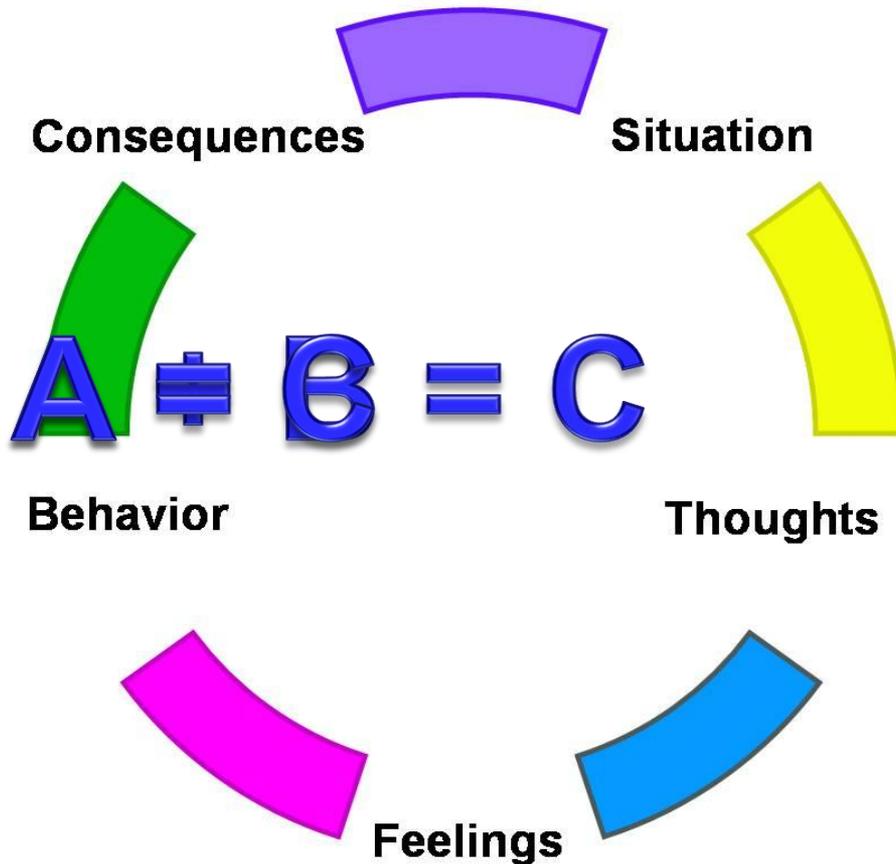


- Family based therapies – Multi-systemic & Functional Family Therapy
- Social learning – modeling prosocial behavior, skills development
- Cognitive behavioral – cognitive theory, problem solving
- Radical behavioral – token economies, contingency management
- Targeting specific criminogenic needs – problem sexual behavior, violence, substance abuse, education, serious mental illness

Treatment Principle



Cognitive Restructuring



Thinking Reports

Functional Analysis

Cost Benefit Analysis

Cognitive Skills: Tools in the Tool Box



Model by Staff



Roleplay by Youth



Feedback &
Reinforcement

Reinforcements



- Rewarding behavior is more effective than punishing
- Immediacy
- Specific to youth (powerful)
- Link reinforcement to behavior/thinking
- Explore alternatives

Effective Programs Have Certain Characteristics



- Disrupt delinquent relationships & build natural supportive prosocial relationships
- Assist youth in maintaining contact with the family and work to teach family members skills to support youth
- Intensity of interventions corresponds with level of risk
- Provides for a continuum of care
- Have qualified, experienced, dedicated, & educated leadership & staff
- Adhere to program fidelity
 - Establish performance measures and conduct evaluations
- Are stable & have sufficient resources & support

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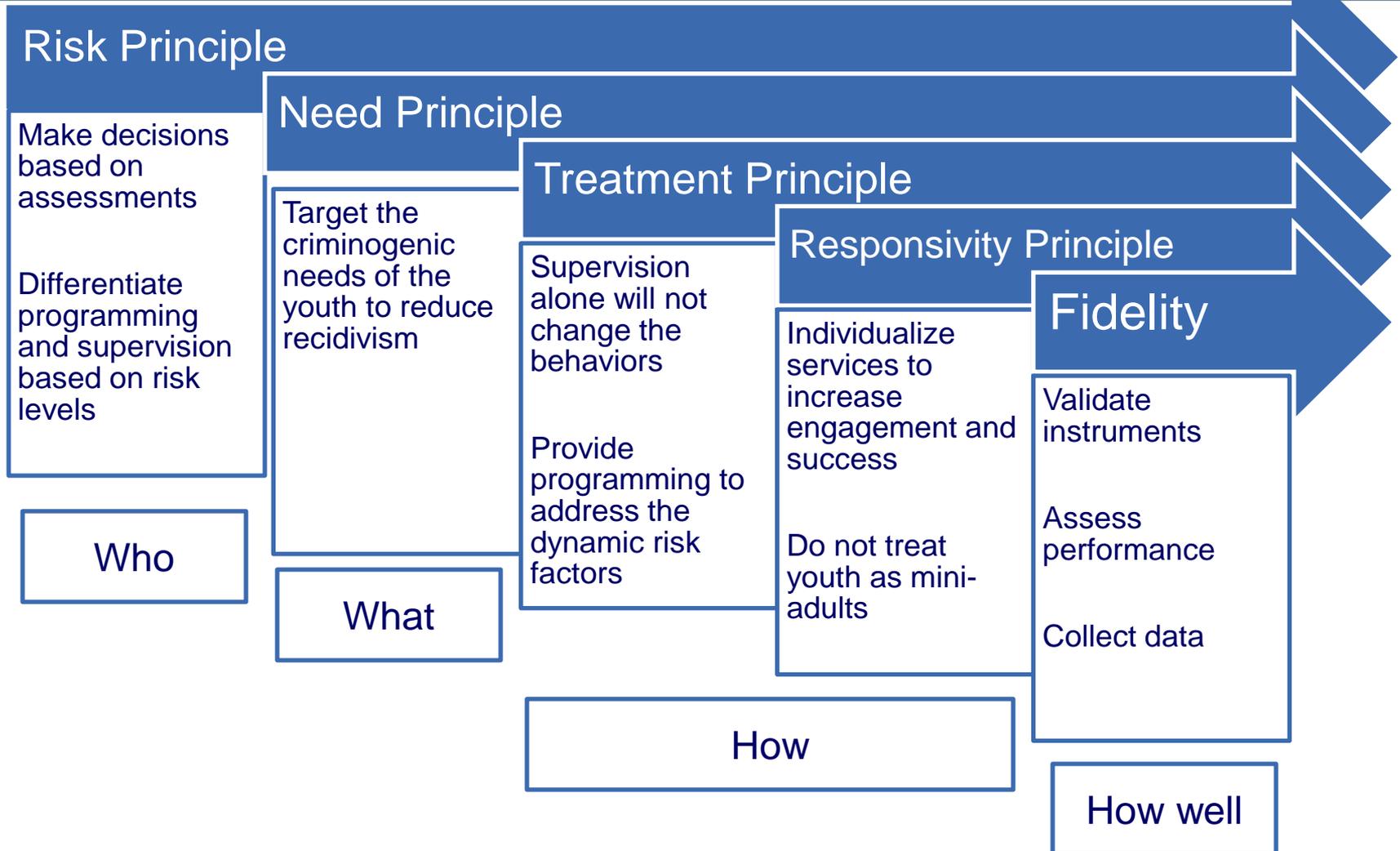
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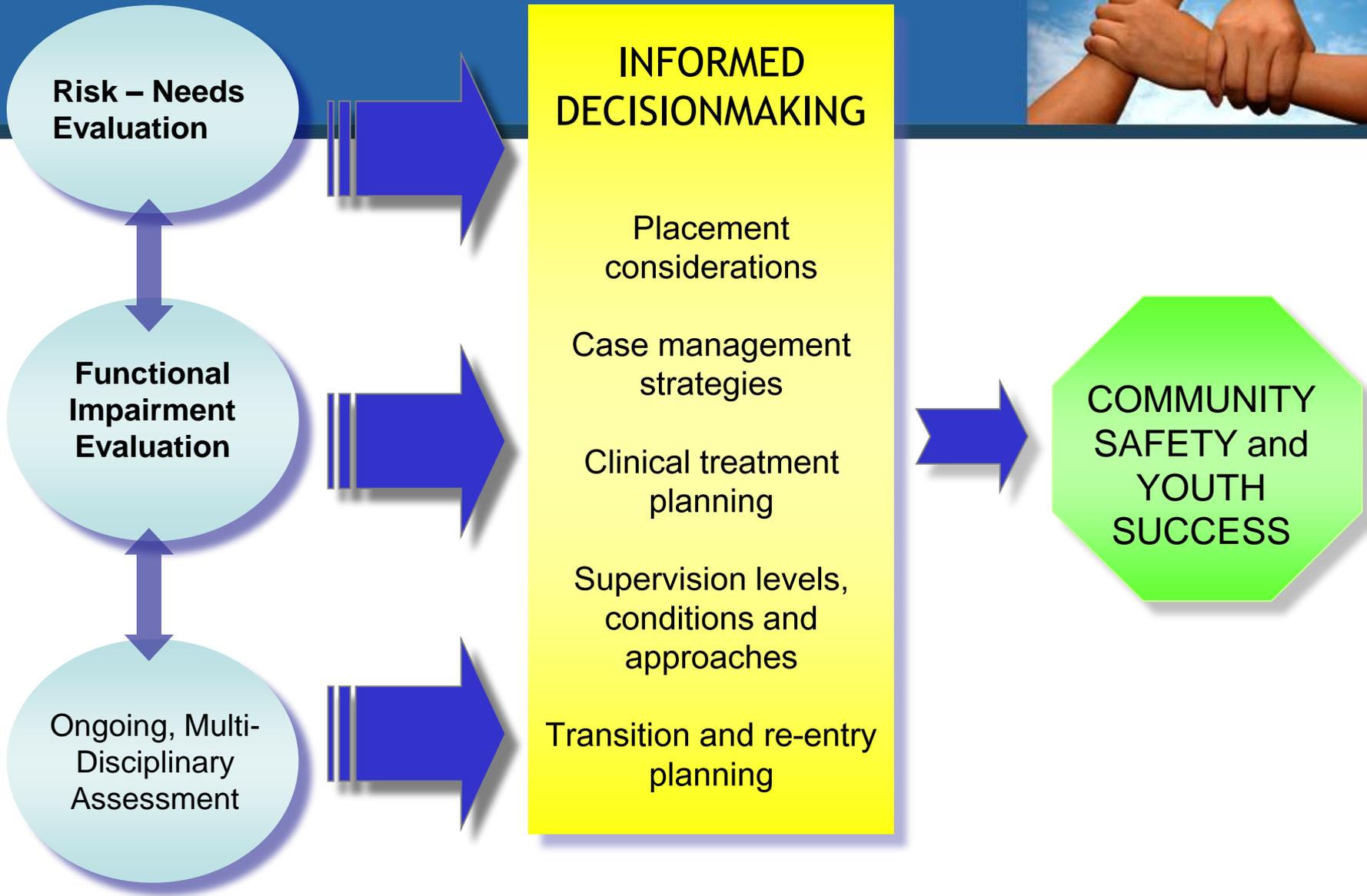
Responsivity Principle



- Specific responsivity refers to the learning/interaction style of the juveniles which may affect their engagement/success in programming
- Youth are not the same!
- One size does not fit all
- Match youth to staff and program based on certain factors
 - Motivation
 - Mental health
 - Maturity
 - Demographics
 - Cognitive deficiencies

Evidence-based Practices: Summary





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