

Title of Session: Special Education Forum - Resistance to Treatment while Incarcerated

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PaulDB: If we can create some understanding that getting an education contributes to successful post-release employment, maybe we can motivate the youth to take more interest in his/her education.

BJB2 . o O (you mean besides being a basketball or football star?)

PaulDB: Do you have some form of career or occupational interest inventory that can be used with your students?

BJB2: I'm sure I can find one

PaulDB: If you can, then I suggest getting the kids who are suspended to take the test as a part of their cottage study.

BJB2: we also have a person who works with the kids on transition...he uses career links

PaulDB: I like career links! It is a good starting point. Every kid who has completed some portion of Career links has a built in lesson plan to work with.

BJB2 nods. Biggest handicap is reading levels

PaulDB: Yes, but that should become a source of inspiration rather than a liability.

BJB2 smiles...from your fingers to God's ears!

PaulDB: Most kids want to find a job!! We just need to be creative in how we demonstrate to the youth how what we do can help him/her find a job.

DavidW: is there any sort of database of people who were in similar situations in the past who are know out in the world working, Paul?

BJB2 tries to remain upbeat and optimistic while counting down the days till retirement.

PaulDB: You and I think about careers and occupations, kids think about a job and earning money.

BJB2: David, I'd love to see statistics on that...but you don't usually see the positive

BJB2: yes, Paul, it's all about the bling!

PaulDB: There was an extensive study done by the U.S. Department of Justice based on data from the Federal Bureau of Prisons regarding post-release success of federal inmates.

PaulDB: I believe it was published in the middle 1990's but do not have an exact date.

DavidW: but some people do manage to turn things around, right?

PaulDB: What I remember was that federal inmates who earned a GED while incarcerated had a lower recidivism rate than those who did not earn their GED.

DavidW: sure, that follows

PaulDB: More surprising, federal inmates who both earned a GED and completed some form of vocational training as a group, had the lowest recidivism rate.

DavidW: just wondering whether there might be motivation for those people (financial incentive) to connect with incarcerated youth - mentoring

PaulDB: What did not surprise me was that federal inmates who completed some form of vocational training but did not earn a GED had the same recidivism rate as those who had earned a GED.

BJB2: difficult to provide voc ed in a juvenile facility...they're not there long enough

PaulDB: I am a strong believer that mentoring of a delinquent youth during incarceration and then continuing that support after released will have real benefits.

BJB2: that I definitely agree with, Paul

PaulDB: Actually, most vocational programs have one or more Occupational Completion Points.

DavidW: has anyone tried to set up a study for something like that?

PaulDB: Yes and no David. There are some confidentiality issues that come into play when working with both juvenile and adult offenders.

DavidW: It seems with such a huge prison population in the US there would be financial incentives to study ways of decreasing it

PaulDB: An Occupational Completion Point means that the youth has mastered a certain skill set within the vocational area.

DavidW: can you give me an example of one, please?

BJB2 understands...but where do they go from there?

DavidW . o O (typing?)

BJB2: plumber might learn how to solder or make pipe connections

PaulDB: David, the problem is that many prisons are operated under the terms of a contract with some state or federal agency.

DavidW: does the contract include any sort of follow-up?

BJB2: the inmates receive a certificate for their voc training

DavidW: It seems like the challenge is whether incarceration is simply punishment or does it lead to some sort of rehabilitation

PaulDB: BJ is correct, but the skill set would be "plumbing connections" to include copper, pvc, valves, and an assortment of other fittings.

BJB2 chuckles...see, at least I knew that not all connections were copper/metal ;-)

DavidW smiles

BJB2: that's the question of the millennium, David

PaulDB: Most contracts do not include follow-up because most adult offenders and juvenile offenders must complete some form of post-release supervision by the state or federal agency.

DavidW: I assume the BIG hurdle is regardless of the skill set, making the connection to someone working who is willing to hire the individual

BJB2: big article in our Sunday paper on that topic...

BJB2: most support for former inmates comes from faith based organizations...

BJB2: and companies just don't want to hire ex cons

PaulDB: That is why I keep trying to remind people that there is a federal tax benefit to hiring a release ex-offender, either juvenile or adult..

BJB2: is this available to any industry/business?

PaulDB: In fact, for six months, the federal government will pay one half of the salary of

the ex-offender.

DavidW: has that policy made any impact since it was instituted?

PaulDB: To my knowledge, the tax benefit is available to any business that meets certain requirements. I do not know all of the requirements.

PaulDB: Equally important, the federal government will provide a surety bond on behalf of any ex-offender hired by a business.

BJB2: ahhh...the bond issue was something mentioned in the newspaper article! But they didn't mention the feds providing one...just the difficulty in obtaining a bond

PaulDB: Contracted prisons are paid on a per/inmate/day basis. While there are some limitations (population restrictions) in any contract, returning inmates simply keep the prison filled.

PaulDB: The process for obtaining the surety bond differs from state to state or from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. But, under either the Voc Rehab Act of 1973 or the Carl B. Perkins project there is language regarding the surety bond, if memory serves me correctly.

BJB2: this is just for adults?

PaulDB: I know here in Florida there is specific mention of the surety bond as a part of the state's Vocational Plan. Perhaps you would do well to look there for additional information?

PaulDB: No, I believe it is for juveniles as well, although there may be an age restrictions. For example, kids under 16 cannot work in certain occupations so I seem to recall a similar restriction (based on age) regarding the bonding process.

BJB2 nods

PaulDB: David, I seem to recall reading somewhere that the tax benefit was being misused. Some employers would hire an ex-offender, take advantage of the credit and then fire the employee once the six months had elapsed.

DavidW: No doubt that tax benefits can get mis-used

BJB2 wonders if Paul saw the documentary "A Hard Straight"

DavidW . o O (sadly)

PaulDB: I don't think so.

DavidW: powerful film

BJB2: I did a workshop on that at CEA International...worth taking a look

PaulDB: When was it on? who was the producer?

DavidW: <http://www.ahardstraight.com/>

BJB2 hugs...thanks, David

PaulDB: Thanks!!

PaulDB: I will follow up on that.

BJB2: Goro was a guest for me in Tapped In

DavidW: Here's the PBS web site for it:

DavidW: <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/hardstraight/>

PaulDB: LaVaughn keeps me pretty well posted on what is happening in the Federal system and I still have several contacts within the state system so I think I am pretty current with my understanding of the situations.

BJB2 agrees

PaulDB: Trust me, the situation is not "pretty"!

BJB2 nods solemnly

BJB2: well, in spite of a selective group of participants, we've managed to have an interesting discussion, Paul

BJB2: Thursday I'm having a guest speaker that was at CEA International

PaulDB: I was trying to do my dissertation on a possible correlation between residential program participation and a self-reported history of maladjustment.

PaulDB: However, the extent of the contractual programs within the Florida juvenile justice system kept me from obtaining "letters of support".

PaulDB: Without the letters of support, the Department of Juvenile Justice would not approve the research project.

PaulDB: The letters of support provided evidence that the facility was willing to allow me on-site to do the data collection.

BJB2: you'd think juvenile justice would be more supportive

PaulDB: I tell you this David as a way of explaining my earlier comment regarding confidentiality as well as the effects of contracts on the research potential.

BJB2 . o O (have you used the new CEA discussion board, Paul?)

DavidW listens

BJB2: there is a research group that might be interested in your proposal

PaulDB: No I have not BJ. I really did not expect to encounter the difficulties I experienced.

BJB2 . o O (nature of the beast)

PaulDB: I thought that most facilities would be anxious to learn about a possible reason for the "resistance to treatment" by so many of the confined youth.

DavidW: asking big bureaucracies to do something they don't normally almost always engenders resistance

PaulDB: Yes, but the individual facilities were responsive, it was corporate headquarters that seemed unwilling.

DavidW: exactly

PaulDB: Sometimes David I still think of myself as a practitioner seeking a way to improve, enhance or increase the effectiveness of my efforts.

DavidW smiles

PaulDB: This project had such an intent.

DavidW: You would like to think other people see themselves that way as well, but, some people don't want to do the "extra work"

PaulDB: God forbid I loose that attitude!

BJB2: once an educator, always an educator!

BJB2: put out some feelers on the research sig

PaulDB: On my grave it shall be carved: "He tried to educate the world".

BJB2: wow!

DavidW: anyone at university level might be able to help push for you, Paul?

BJB2: very impressive

DavidW agrees

PaulDB: Actually, the University was real concerned about the kinds of questions on the instrument I was intending to use.

DavidW: what was the concern?

BJB2 needs to get to the next discussion. Shall we try again on November 19?

PaulDB: How can you ask parents to approve their child answering questions about possible maltreatment while living at home?

DavidW: that's tough

BJB2: ouch!

PaulDB: BJ I guess it is almost time to close and yes, I do expect to be here on November 19, 2007.

BJB2: thanks, Paul. I've enjoyed the interaction.

BJB2: always nice to talk with someone who is positive in their attitude...too many correctional educators are pretty negative and burned out

PaulDB: The Department of Juvenile Justice suggested that I draft a Waiver of Parental Request, which I did and did not hear anything back to suggest that the Request would not be approved.

PaulDB: Ahh BJ, I really enjoy what I do and see no reason not to continue trying to "make things better".

DavidW: just did a quick search - that topic must come up in other research on family life, I would guess, Paul

PaulDB: David, I appreciate your questions, I did quite a bit of research into the issue of "privatization" and have collected a rather extensive library on the topic.

DavidW: I'm sure

DavidW: just finding things in medical/psychiatric/social work research on the web

PaulDB: Actually, there is NO research into a possible relationship between program participation and a self-reported history of maltreatment.

PaulDB: Most studies of adolescent maltreatment are found in the work done with runaways and homeless. Or as background information on delinquent kids.

DavidW: what are the guidelines for doing surveys of drug-use, sexual activity, etc., with people under 18?

DavidW: I would think they would need to address some of the same issues you are looking at

BJB2 wonders what constitutes "maltreatment"?

PaulDB: Research into maltreatment has looked at it as a "cause" for something - runaway, becoming homeless or delinquency or criminal behavior. I wanted to look at it as an "effect" on participation in residential programs.

DavidW: especially if it is "self-reported maltreatment"

PaulDB: Maltreatment is a common term used to describe abuse-sexual, physical, mental, emotional and neglect-medical, nutritional, deprivation of shelter.

PaulDB: There is clear evidence that not all maltreatment is reported and not all maltreatment reported is investigated.

DavidW agrees

BJB2 also agrees.

PaulDB: When it comes to the use of self-report as a source of information, there is evidence that self-report is at least as valid as any other non-quantitative method.

PaulDB: The figures I found suggest that during 2003, there were 3 million reported instances of maltreatment. Only 32% of those instances were found to be substantiated.

PaulDB: However, 33% of the reported instances were dismissed without benefit of an investigation.

PaulDB: For comparison, runaway kids report a higher incidence of maltreatment than is reported in the state data bases for reported incidents of maltreatment.

BJB2: but runaways have little credibility?

DavidW: well, you know there have been these horrible cases (some in New Jersey) of

kids kept in closets, not fed, etc., and the State gets sued because social workers hadn't visited the homes for long periods of time

DavidW: the caseworker loads are just impossible, typically

PaulDB: Think of runaways as youth who have decided to take action in their own best interest. Such a though process would see the act of running away as a pro-active positive response to an uncomfortable or unsafe situation.

PaulDB: Research by some of the most noted experts in the field of runaway children are beginning to suggest that kids who run away may not be the problem but the evidence of a home situation that is dangerous, debilitating or down right insufferable.

PaulDB: Gee whiz, I could go on for another hour if you two keep feeding me questions!

DavidW smiles

DavidW: We're good at that

BJB2 . o O (inquiry based learning ;-)

DavidW: Just looking at the Covenant House web site

PaulDB: Yes you are. Find my weakness and exploit it effectively!

PaulDB: That is an example of what I have been talking about.

PaulDB: You will see that there are at least two different survey/questionnaire instruments used there to collect information about the youth who enter the facility.

PaulDB: One of those instruments was originally created by the federal government as a basis for determining how much funding would be provided to the separate runaway shelters.

PaulDB: However, as funding priorities in the federal government changed, the continued use of the form was no longer required.

PaulDB: But, the kind of information it collected was determined to be most useful and so many of the facilities continued to collect and report the data.

PaulDB: If you get the chance, you ought to look into the information provided as well as the research into maltreatment of runaways.

DavidW: is that data something you could access, Paul, for your research?

PaulDB: Yes it is David and I did. In fact, But the difference is that kids who runaway

took that action as opposed to kids who became involved in delinquent behavior.

DavidW: although I can see some cross-over (runaway AND delinquent behavior)

PaulDB: Research suggest that maltreatment does not "cause" kids to runaway just like it does not "cause" kids to become delinquent.

DavidW thinks

DavidW: that seems counter-intuitive, to me at least

PaulDB: However, the research indicates that the presence of maltreatment is a "risk" factor that contributes to either running away or engaging in delinquent behavior.

PaulDB: There are influences that affect the response to the maltreatment being experienced. If the maltreated child has a friend who is supportive of the idea to runaway, as opposed to a friend who engages in delinquent behavior, running away is the likely outcome.

DavidW nods

PaulDB: That is a simplified example and certainly does not include all possible influences but it does provide an example of the idea.

DavidW: yes - studying human behavior is complicated

DavidW smiles

DavidW: Thanks for the discussion, Paul - don't mean to keep you here all night

PaulDB: There are several theories that were a part of my research on this topic, Strain theory, for example. Basic premise of the theory is that all life is subject to strain from a variety of sources. That strain with the greatest strength will affect the organism the most.

DavidW: there are actually some mathematical models for that...I've seen somewhere

PaulDB: Okay, I guess I am getting too involved

DavidW smiles

PaulDB: I'll go now but am truly appreciative for the opportunity to discuss this topic. Although I have had to withdraw the project at this time, I do intend to pursue the research after I earn the degree.

DavidW: Not at all - it's just something you know a lot about

DavidW: Fascinating topic to discuss

PaulDB: Yes it is. It is one of those topics that may have a profound effect on how we look at kids who are resistant to treatment while incarcerated and thus become the recidivist shortly after release.

PaulDB: I'm going now. Hope you all have a good evening and I look forward to hearing from you next month on November 19, 2007.

PaulDB: By BJ

PaulDB: Bh David

DavidW: Take care, Paul

DavidW waves