The 8 Evidence-Based Principles

Responsivity Considers Each Individual

According to Carrie Sullivan of the University Of Cincinnati, there are two components to the responsivity principle—general and specific. General responsivity encourages the use of proven treatment approaches, namely cognitive behavioral interventions. Cognitive behavioral strategies help youth change risky thinking patterns and attitudes, as well as developing pro-social skills.

Studies show that well-implemented cognitive behavioral interventions can reduce recidivism by as much as 30 percent on average, particularly with moderate to high risk youths.

In this issue of CSUnity, we focus on the specific responsivity principle. “Specific responsivity states that services and interventions should be matched to important characteristics of the youth and family for services to have the best outcome,” Ms. Sullivan says. “These characteristics include temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender to name a few. Specific responsivity can also include things like transportation, finances, reading level, mental health, a youth’s stage of change, or anything else that may affect...
We use the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) to inform the decision-making process from the time a client enters our system until they are discharged. Using tools based upon known risk factors and criminogenic needs takes the decisions made about supervision levels and interventions to a level beyond subjective judgment and intuition.

YASI has some specific responsivity areas included in it, such as the Mental Health domain. The domain does not predict criminal outcome, a finding that also is consistent with the mainstream correctional literature that sees personal distress as a responsivity factor. The domain is fairly comprehensive and includes psychosis, bipolar, other mood disorders, suicidal ideation/attempts, thought/personality disorders, and a global category termed “other.”

The Responsivity Principle shows us HOW to match evidence-based treatment, programming, and interventions based on a client’s responsivity factors to increase client success, and have positive outcomes on supervision.

CSU 13–Richmond

CSU 13 has programs that help juveniles on supervision get DMV IDs and birth certificates that are essential to accessing educational and employment opportunities, and are critical needs for juvenile reentry. Referrals come from probation or parole staff and Reentry Advocate Sasha Davenport. Davenport and Fiscal Technician Carolyn White work closely together to streamline the process, and then go with the youth to the DMV to see the process through.

CSU 18–Alexandria

CSU 18 uses a number of different mechanisms related to language services. They use the Court interpreter program for pre-disposition cases. These are contracted interpreters in most any language needed. “While face-to-face interaction is the ideal, we also use language line a great deal,” says CSU 18 Director Mike Mackey.

CSU 31–Manassas

CSU 31 uses the language line (interpreter) services extensively for their considerable Spanish speaking clientele. It is utilized throughout the CSU at various times. “Calls are made to the service for the specific language translation needed, and probation officers sit with the families and youth during meetings,” says CSU 31 Director Jeff Homan.

Left: CSU 13 Reentry Advocate Sasha Davenport helps a youth obtain a birth certificate at the Virginia Department of Health’s Vital Records office. Right: CSU 13 Fiscal Technician Carolyn White and Davenport accompany two youth to the DMV to get their ID cards.
Responsivity In Action

Fairfax County’s Juvenile and Domestic Relations court provides many language services to children and families, including an in-house Volunteer Interpreters Program (VIP) as well as contracted interpreters, state interpreters and technology. VIP volunteers are recruited and trained by CSU 19 staff.

CSU 19 also offers Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) groups. ART is a cognitive behavioral intervention program to help youth improve social skill competence and moral reasoning, better manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior and ultimately reduce recidivism. Program techniques are designed to teach youths how to control their impulses and take perspectives other than their own.

Regional Service Coordinators’ Perspective

We encourage all of our providers to address specific responsivity issues within their services. One example is ensuring that the service is developmentally appropriate, and that youth, and often their family members, can intellectually benefit from the services. Service intensity and dosage also should match the individual risk needs.

– Korah Schaffert, AMIKids

EBA understands the importance of identifying potential barriers to treatment success. We worked with DJJ and AMIkids to modify the service referral form to include a section for listing responsivity issues, such as transportation and language. Upon referral, CSU staff list potential responsivity concerns on the form, which helps match the youth to the correct service.

– Kara Brooks, EBA