Sustaining families, dissuading crime: The effectiveness of a family preservation program with male delinquents

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Abstract

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Purpose: Family factors have long been considered an important contributor to the criminogenic process. Family Preservation (FP) programs attempt to improve family functioning and, thereby, dissuade future delinquency. Despite years of delivery, the limited research concerning the influence of FP programs on juvenile delinquency remains inconclusive.

Methods: This study examined the effectiveness of an FP program implemented in a metropolitan county of a large Southern state. Subjects were adjudicated male juveniles referred to the program by the courts. Recidivism outcomes for FP participants were compared against those of a simple random sample of non-participants.

Results: Findings suggest that FP does not impact recidivism among study participants. Issues with treatment fidelity may be responsible for the lack of results for this program.

Conclusion: These findings fail to lend support to the FP program. However, they do demonstrate the importance of treatment fidelity in juvenile justice programming.

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Introduction

In 2007, an estimated 2.18 million juveniles were arrested (Puzzanchera, 2009), accounting for 15% of all arrests in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008). To diminish juvenile crime, the juvenile justice system utilizes programs that address the underlying risk factors for recidivism. Given the relationship between the family environment and delinquency (Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Laub & Sampson, 1988), a family-focused therapeutic approach, Family Preservation (FP), may be able to facilitate desistance from delinquency.

FP was first used in potential foster cases with the goal of improving the family's functioning in order to keep children in the home. Given the program's success in these cases, interest shifted toward using the approach with juvenile delinquents. Current research on FP is split as to its effects on juvenile delinquency, with some studies finding positive changes (Haapala & Kinney, 1988) and others finding no effect (Nugent, Carpenter, & Parks, 1993; Coleman & Jenson, 2000). The current study adds to the body of literature by assessing this divide. By analyzing data on a countywide FP program, it attempts to discern how this program affects recidivism outcomes for juveniles under its care. Particularly during times of economic uncertainty, it becomes exceedingly crucial to ensure that these programs represent money well spent. Whether or not an intervention can properly function under the monetary constraints placed upon it and exhibit a positive impact on the behavior of offenders is an important social consideration.

Literature review

Family influence on delinquency

The Gluecks (Glueck & Glueck, 1950) were the first to tie family dynamics to juvenile criminogenesis. Their decade long study of 1,000 delinquent and non-delinquent juveniles illuminated the importance of a solid family unit in insulating youths from a criminal lifestyle. They showed that a lack of family cohesion, parental supervision, discipline and affection were correlated with future criminality in juveniles. However, the Gluecks' work came under scrutiny for lacking methodological precision (Hirschi & Selvin, 1967).

In response to this claim, Laub and Sampson (1988) reanalyzed the Glueck and Glueck's (1950) classic study. Their reconstruction of the original longitudinal data supported the Gluecks' conclusion that childhood delinquency was associated with various aspects of family functioning. Namely, lack of parental supervision, attachment and discipline coincided with juvenile delinquency. In short, these landmark studies suggested that a poor family environment significantly affected the likelihood of childhood delinquency.

Other scholars have arrived at similar conclusions as well. A thirty-year longitudinal study revealed that maternal behavior and paternal interaction exerted a strong effect on a child's delinquency and adult crime (McCord, 1991). In a study of low-income families, family
adversity and poor parenting were related to increased aggression in juveniles and, in turn, a higher rate of delinquent behavior (Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994). Furthermore, youth who lacked parental support and control (Wright & Cullen, 2001), had fewer supportive parents (Johnson, Su, Gerstein, Shin & Hoffmann, 1995), and experienced the combination of low parental attachment and high direct control (Seyditz, 1993) were at higher risk of delinquent behavior. Clearly, scholars have discovered a relationship between family dysfunction and delinquency.

The family preservation model

The development of Family Preservation (FP) is generally agreed to coincide with the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. This legislation called for each state to make “reasonable efforts...to preserve and reunify families” before removing a child from his home (p. 3). This shift in focus from separating families to preserving them represented a drastic ideological change for many states (Kelly & Blythe, 2000). As a product of overarching federal legislation, FP has encapsulated a variety of approaches aimed at short-term, home-based interventions designed to breed positive change in family functioning, where the caseworker(s) offers both tangible and therapeutic aid for the family (Wells & Biegel, 1991). Concrete needs such as employment, shelter and sustenance received priority, with access to group and individual counseling, interpersonal skills and life-skills training.

Fraser and associates (Fraser, Nelson, & Rivard, 1997) outline a number of characteristics common to FP including flexible service hours individually tailored to the family’s needs, beliefs and culture. Services have been relatively brief: lasting between one and six months (Kinney, Haapala, & Booth, 1991). This limited time frame, argue the program developers, is sufficiently rigorous to elicit positive change in the family dynamics. Kinney and colleagues further explain that such a short treatment period served as a motivator for family members and counselors, alike. When both parties were aware that they only had a number of weeks to improve the situation, all were more engaged in the treatment process as nothing can be left for later.

During treatment, the family has nearly unlimited access to their caseworker (usually master’s level social workers) and various services and approaches. Caseworkers typically spend between two and fifteen hours with each family every week, depending on the program and family needs (Fraser et al., 1997). In addition, they are on-call around the clock for emergency situations. As Kinney et al. (1991) explain, caseworkers spend as much time with the family as is necessary to meet their needs. This level of attention is made possible by each caseworker having a small number of families under their care, generally two to six at a time.

Research on family preservation

Research on the use of FP with children at risk of out of home foster placement tends to show positive effects. Kinney et al. (1991) first analyzed the Homebuilders model, the original implementation of FP, in 1977. They found 97 percent of children were still living with their parents sixteen-months after treatment. FP has also been shown to be effective in reuniting families separated by child services (Walton, Fraser, Lewis, Pecora, & Walton, 1993) and keeping children out of official foster placement (Pecora, Fraser, & Haapala, 1992). However, these findings are confounded by the effects of self-selection of caseworkers into the treatment and control programs (in the case of Walton et al.) and by potential selection bias as to which families received treatment and which did not (in the case of Pecora et al.). Such subjectivity limits inference about the effects of the program by introducing alternative explanations for the positive outcomes seen in the treatment group. Pecora and colleagues individually matched families receiving FP with a small overflow group that qualified for services, but for which budget constraints did not allow access. Twelve months after their initial intake, significantly more FP participant families remained intact, relative to the overflow group.

To date, Kirk and Griffith (2004) have conducted the only long-term follow-up analysis of FP. Six years post-treatment, they analyzed 542 youth that were high-risk of foster placement. They found that involvement in FP significantly reduced the rate of placement for these children when compared to the typical child welfare services. Interestingly, the authors concluded that the positive effects of treatment increased considerably as the child’s risk level increased. Consistent with prior research (Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen, 1990) the researchers find that the most at-risk individuals seem to benefit the most from this intensive program.

Not all of the research on FP provides support for the approach. Meezan and McCroskey (1996) found no difference between the placement rates of FP families and the non-service group in Los Angeles County. Still, the FP families and caseworkers did report “small but significant improvements” and more satisfaction with their intervention (p. 22). Feldman (1991), utilizing an experimental design, also failed to find a significant difference between the placement rates of the FP group and those receiving traditional family services. Feldman admits, however, that these placement decisions, regardless of the approach, are subjective and often unrelated to family functioning. It is also important to note that placement in and of itself does not necessarily constitute a negative outcome. In some situations, removal from a destructive home environment can represent the correct or most beneficial outcome for the child.

While literature has generally supported utilization of FP with child welfare cases, its effectiveness with juvenile delinquents has been less successful. Coleman and Jenson (2000) compared the outcomes for children officially referred to an FP program for multiple behavior problems (at home, school or in the community) to those referred for abusive incidents. During their three-year follow-up, the data showed that children with problem behaviors were significantly more likely to receive a subsequent court conviction than abused youths; suggesting that FP services may be less successful with this population. Similarly, Nugent and colleagues (Nugent, Carpenter, & Parks, 1993) conducted an evaluation in Florida and found that juvenile delinquency was linked with service failure. Families with a delinquent youth were significantly less likely to remain together or to be reunited after receiving FP services. This study was limited, however, by incomplete data collection on these families, making generalizability quite difficult.

On the other hand, some research shows positive results for FP with delinquents. Haapala and Kinney (1988) analyzed FP, specifically the Homebuilders program, with 678 status-offending youths (e.g. curfew violators, runaways) and their families between 1982 and 1985. They found successful outcomes across all four Washington County. Still, the FP families and caseworkers did report that such a short treatment period served as a motivator for family involvement in FP signiﬁcantly reduced the rate of placement for delinquents is mixed, further research on FP is needed to elucidate the
program’s effect on delinquent behavior. The present study addresses this obvious gap in the literature. It adds to the literature on the Family Preservation Program by assessing the recidivism outcomes for delinquent males. This study attempts to answer the following question: what effect, if any, does inclusion in FP have on juvenile recidivism?

Methods

Program description

This study analyzed a Family Preservation (FP) program in a single county administered through a non-profit social service organization. The county’s juvenile probation department referred youths and their families to the FP program. Probation officers chose families that exhibited motivation to change the factors within the home that promoted delinquency. This FP program tried to accept all types of offenses, excluding only status offenders and sex offenders (with limited exceptions).

The program maintained a staff of six Masters-level therapists. The therapists received on-the-job training, which consisted of two-months of ride-alongs and field observations with an experienced therapist before receiving their own cases. Therapists were encouraged to approach their cases in their own manner as long as it fit within the common goals of the organization. Therapists worked cases in teams of two. One therapist performed assessments at intake, including the MAYSI (Massachusetts Youth Screening Inventory), as well as at discharge by way of an in-house instrument designed to gauge the family’s attainment of specific goals. These goals were outlined at the beginning of treatment and were specific to each family’s unique situation. The second therapist was responsible for program delivery and goal attainment, working directly with the family on a weekly basis.

The second therapist typically spent two hours per week on each case, maintaining a caseload of 18–20 families. The juvenile was seen alone at their school for one hour and the entire household was treated for an additional hour every week. The family exerted considerable control over their outcomes through input on the goals of treatment. Families were involved in treatment for up to six months, which could be extended if necessary. Therapists employed a variety of techniques, such as group and individual counseling, tailored to the family’s specific needs and the therapist’s strengths. At the culmination of their time in the program, therapists connected the family with community resources in order to provide a continued support structure should the family experience problems post-treatment.

Participants

Participants were 10- to 17-year-old first-time male offenders referred to the FP program by an urban county probation department from 2001 through 2007 (n = 286). FP participants were compared to a simple random sample of 1,074 non-FP male participants who were referred to the county juvenile probation department, but were not included in the FP program.

The two groups were similar in some respects (see Table 1). About half of each group lived in a single-mother household and less than one-quarter of the youths resided with both parents. Recidivism rates were also similar for the two groups, with around one-third of FP and non-FP youths being rearrested within one year. No significant differences appeared between FP and non-FP participants in the proportion of African-American and Hispanic youths. However, significantly more Caucasian youths were referred to FP ($\chi^2 = 9.24, p < .01$). These racial demographics were similar to that of the county as a whole. Some extra-legal factors suggested a less risky FP group of delinquents. Significantly fewer FP youths presented with substance abuse or mental health needs due to the county’s preference to exclude such youths from the FP program ($\chi^2 = 10.92, p < .01; \chi^2 = 15.83, p = .01$). Yet, the FP group appeared to constitute a more serious collection of juvenile offenders. Thirty-eight percent of FP youths were referred for a felony offense ($\chi^2 = 15.86, p < .01$) and forty-five percent were detained (arrested) at their referral ($\chi^2 = 17.28, p < .01$) compared to twenty-four and thirty-two percent of the non-FP group, respectively.

Outcome measure

Archival data collected by county probation officers as part of their case management system were analyzed for incidence of recidivism. Recidivism was operationalized as rearrest within one year of the individual’s initial referral (rearrest = 1; no rearrest = 0). A longer follow-up period would have been ideal; however, the choice of a one-year follow-up represents a trade-off between the need for a meaningful opportunity to recidivate and the need for the most sizeable sample the data allowed.

Independent variables

Most predictor variables were included because they have an established relationship with recidivism for juvenile offenders (Cottle, Lee, & Heilbrun, 2001; Myner, Santman, Cappelletty, & Perlmutter, 1998). As shown in Table 1, participation in the FP program was operationalized as a binary variable (No-FP = 0, FP = 1). The remaining variables were broken down into legal and extra-legal variables, where legal referred to characteristics of the offense itself and extra-legal to characteristics of the individual. The extra-legal variables included age at referral (10–17 years) and ethnicity. Ethnicity was controlled for via two dummy variables for Hispanic and Black with Caucasian as the reference group. Also, two variables identified the juvenile’s living situation: living with both biological parents (all other situations = 0, both parents = 1), and living with mother only (all other situations = 0, mother = 1). Additionally, gang affiliation (non-gang member = 0, gang member = 1), mental health needs (no = 0, yes = 1), and substance abuse issues (no = 0, yes = 1) were included as extra-legal variables. The legal variables included being formally referred by police (informal = 0, formal = 1), committing a felony offense (non-felony = 0, felony = 1) and being detained at referral (not arrested = 0, arrested = 1).

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Non-Family Preservation</th>
<th>Family Preservation</th>
<th>Significance Test ($\chi^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 1,074 (79%)</td>
<td>n = 286 (21%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-legal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Age ($\bar{x}$, s)</td>
<td>14.71 1.45</td>
<td>14.62 1.37</td>
<td>17.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>336 31</td>
<td>82 29</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>408 38</td>
<td>137 48</td>
<td>9.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with Two Parents</td>
<td>264 25</td>
<td>60 21</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived with Mother Only</td>
<td>525 49</td>
<td>146 51</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Affiliated</td>
<td>83 8</td>
<td>12 4</td>
<td>4.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Needs</td>
<td>72 7</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>15.83**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>80 7</td>
<td>6 2</td>
<td>10.92**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Referral</td>
<td>967 90</td>
<td>284 99</td>
<td>26.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felony Offense</td>
<td>257 24</td>
<td>109 38</td>
<td>15.86**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detained at Referral</td>
<td>343 32</td>
<td>129 45</td>
<td>17.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recidivated</td>
<td>362 34</td>
<td>106 37</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages rounded to nearest integer.

* Significance at p < .05.

** Significance at p < .01.
Logistic regression was chosen as the appropriate method of analysis since the dependent variable, recidivism, was dichotomous. The first model incorporated all of the independent variables and participants for felony-level offenders. Alternatively, the second model analyzed these variables for misdemeanor-level offenders.

**Results**

**Felony offenders**

As shown in Table 2, the first logit model reports the effects of each predictor variable on recidivism for felony-level male offenders. No significant effects of the Family Preservation program were found. In fact, living with a single mother was the only significant predictor of recidivism for these juveniles. Juveniles who lived with a single, biological mother experienced nearly two times the odds of recidivism. Both gang affiliation and substance abuse issues showed a significant increase of about two times the odds of recidivism. One legal variable also increased the odds of recidivism: being detained at referral.

**Misdemeanor offenders**

Similar to felony offenders, no significant effects for the Family Preservation program were found amongst misdemeanor offenders. A number of other extra-legal and legal variables, however, reached significance for this group. Older juveniles showed a slight increase in the odds of recidivating. Juveniles who lived with both biological parents experienced significantly decreased odds of rearrest compared to individuals in other living situations. Both gang affiliation and substance abuse issues showed a significant increase of about two times the odds of recidivism. One legal variable also increased the odds of recidivism: being detained at referral.

Z-tests for the equality of coefficients (Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 1998) analyzed the effects of the independent variables between the two models. The effect of substance abuse needs was found to be stronger for misdemeanor offenders than for felony offenders. Living with a single mother was found to have a stronger effect for felony offenders. The impact of all other independent variables was found to be similar across the two models, indicating that these independent variables behaved similarly across offense levels.

**Discussion**

While these results should not be considered an outright dismissal, they offer little support to the use of the Family Preservation Program with juvenile male misdemeanor or felony offenders. Regardless of offense level, FP program participation lacked significant variation on subsequent recidivism at one-year follow-up. While family factors are certainly a salient part of the delinquency equation, the findings here point to the importance of other aspects of the juvenile’s social world. Namely, substance abuse and gang affiliation were shown to be significant factors in recidivism for misdemeanor juvenile offenders; which finds support in a large body of literature (see, e.g. on substance abuse: Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Dowden & Brown, 2002; Stoolmiller & Bleichman, 2005; and on gang affiliation: Benda & Tollett, 1999; Trulson, Marquart, Mullings, & Caeti, 2005).

While contributing to the literature on FP, some limitations were present in the current study. Namely, these findings were based on official records from a single county’s program. As such, details on family functioning (such as parental nurturing and monitoring) and specific mental health problems while arguably important to program success were simply not available in agency archives. Inherent to real-world operations, juveniles were not randomly selected for FP participation. It is possible that subjective self-selection and inclusion of certain offenders and families into the program could have had undue influence on the outcomes. Additionally, this study was limited to a one-year follow-up for rearrest. Ideally, future research should strive for a longer follow-up period to investigate the prolonged effects of the FP program. Finally, the possible effects of FP on female offenders were not analyzed here and represent an important expansion on the present study.

These limitations in mind, this study alludes to the importance of treatment fidelity for therapeutic programs in the criminal justice system. A major reason for the ineffectiveness of this particular program may have stemmed from its lack of treatment fidelity, or its incongruity with the ideal FP protocol. A major component of treatment fidelity concerns adherence to the original treatment model (Perepletchikova, Hilt, Chereji, & Kazdin, 2009), which has shown a consistent link to successful implementation and outcomes (Henggeler, Melton, Brondino, Scherer, & Hanley, 1997; McHugo, Drake, Teague, & Xie, 1999; Andrews & Dowden, 2005). The FP program was found to have no effect on recidivism. However, the role

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Felony</th>
<th>Misdemeanor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odds</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>−2.41</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Preservation Program</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Legal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasiana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with Two Parents</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives with Mother Only</td>
<td>1.93*</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Affiliate</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Needs</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>−0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Referral</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detained at Referral</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detained at Referral</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>−205.36</td>
<td>−619.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald X²</td>
<td>22.21**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Indicates reference category.

* Significance at p < .05.

** Significance at p < .01.
that lack of adherence to treatment guidelines played on these outcomes cannot be discerned. The transition from researcher-led to practitioner-implemented programs is often fraught with difficulty (Weisz, Donenberg, Han, & Weiss, 1995); not the least of which manifests in treatment fidelity. Program adherence needs to be recognized as a major concern to ensure that any potential benefits ascribed to this approach can be realized.

Two striking differences between the original Homebuilders model (Haapala & Kinney, 1988) and this particular program were the amount of time spent with each family and therapists’ caseloads. Under Haapala and Kinney’s protocol, therapists generally spent eight to ten hours per week with each family and maintained a caseload of two families at a time. However, therapists in the present study handled as many as 20 cases at once and devoted only two hours per week with each family. This caseload size is a departure from the Homebuilders model and has inevitably reduced the time and attention therapists can afford with each case, thereby potentially suppressing any impact for the FP program. Incidentally, the FP program analyzed by Coleman and Jenson (2000) also reported an increased caseload size (an average of six cases) and a lack of program success with delinquent youths. The influence of caseload size specifically has not received significant attention in the treatment fidelity literature and research into its effects is needed.

The autonomy afforded to the therapists represents another potential cause of null findings for the FP program. These therapists were given considerable leeway as to the handling of individual cases and maintained sole discretion as to what therapeutic techniques were used with their families. While this autonomy may have been beneficial to more experienced or talented therapists, the self-direction of their counterparts may have partially explained the lack of effects for the FP program. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to investigate the treatment practices of individual therapists.

A final suggestion that may lead to outcome improvements for FP programs with juvenile delinquents comes from the findings of Andrews and colleagues (Andrews et al., 1990). Namely, intensive programs have been found to provide the most benefit to higher risk individuals. Existing literature on FP programs, the present attempt included, make no mention of differentially targeting those at higher risk of recidivism. However, intensive criminal justice programs that target high-risk offenders have been shown to be more effective in reducing recidivism (Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006). Focusing FP efforts on this specific offender population may result in increased effectiveness and represents a salient concern for future research.

Conclusion

In keeping with the trend toward evidence-based criminal justice practices (see Sherman, Farrington, Welsh, & MacKenzie, 2002), it is advantageous to restrict caseworker discretion and use only those approaches that have shown consistent effectiveness with delinquent populations. In fact, the program administrators, in a recent overhaul of the program, attempted to address this issue among others and move toward an evidence-based approach. Therapists no longer have carte blanche authority as to the types of approaches they can use. While the fundamental aspects of the program have changed significantly to be in line with evidence-based practices, the therapists in the new approach still maintain a higher caseload (12–14 families) and less weekly contact (one hour) than is ideal.

These implementation practices may speak less to the desire of the program administrators, however, and more to the inherently limited funds that plague the current criminal justice system. Various government and private organizations supported the incipient research on the FP model (Kinney, Madsen, Fleming, & Haapala, 1977; Fraser & Haapala, 1987; Pecora et al., 1992). These supporters provided doctoral-level researchers, highly intent on treatment fidelity, with considerable funds for implementation. As FP was disseminated throughout the country, such programs were no doubt required to adapt to the real-world setting of less experienced caseworkers, with less of a stake in fidelity to the model, operating under a more stringent budget. The cost to this county per FP case was roughly $2,300. Adhering to the program developers’ intentions of one to two cases per therapist and 12 hours per week with each family would result in an exorbitant and unrealistic strain on the county coffers. Arguably, programs such as this one are doing the best they can with what they have to work with in this economy.

Nevertheless, if a program, no matter how altruistic, does not display efficacy in outcomes within budgetary constraints, perhaps continued scrutiny is warranted. The FP program is not intended to operate under such heavy caseloads as experienced in this particular setting. Indeed, the findings here suggest that the FP program is ineffective in reducing recidivism when staff are underfunded and overworked. It may still be the case that a program expressing more stringent treatment fidelity will find greater success.

Notes

2. Most juveniles who commit sexual offenses are referred to specialized sex offender programs; however, some may be referred to FP if family issues are implicated as contributing to the youth’s behavior.

3. Examples of goals would include a father obtaining employment and a child obeying his parents’ commands.

4. This is not to imply the implementation of an experimental design. This study represents a retrospective analysis of an FP program via official records maintained by juvenile justice personnel.

5. Measures of educational standing were originally assessed through two variables: last grade completed and school standing (in school vs. suspended or expelled). Due to lack of impact on the models, both were omitted from the final analyses.

6. The influence of multicollinearity was assessed via bivariate correlations and variance inflation factors, both of which suggested that multicollinearity was not an issue in these models.

7. Robust standard errors were calculated in each model.

References


Kirk, R. S., & Grif...