Exploring the Impact of the Sanctuary Model® in a Female Juvenile Justice Facility

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Overview

- Background leading to study
- Sanctuary Model
- Study design
- Results
- Findings
- Conclusion
- Implications
Background leading to study

- Youth in JJ system have been exposed to trauma.
- For females with PTSD, detention experience may result in re-traumatization (Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, 2010).
- Empirical research on effectiveness of programs designed for girls in JJ system is sparse (Cooney, Small, & O’Connor, 2008).
- Importance of conducting formal exploratory study.
Sanctuary Model

- Trauma-informed organizational intervention
- S.E.L.F. framework changes how organizations use LANGUAGE
- 7 Commitments delineate how RELATIONSHIPS are sustained
- Sanctuary Toolkit improves PRACTICE
- Faculty provides consultation over 3 years
- Steering Committee and Core Teams
- Evidence-supported (NCTSN, 2008)
7 Commitments

- Nonviolence
- Emotional Intelligence
- Social Learning
- Democracy
- Open Communication
- Social Responsibility
- Growth and Change
Sanctuary Toolkit

- Community Meetings
- Red Flag Reviews
- Safety Plans
- Team Meetings
- SELF
- Self-Care Planning
Research question

- Has implementation of the Sanctuary Model affected the organizational culture in one maximum security facility for girls?
- If so, in what ways has the model affected the organizational culture?
Study design

- Exploratory, qualitative study
- North Central Secure Treatment Unit (NCSTU), Girls program in Danville, PA
- Facility run by Department of Public Welfare
- Provides gender specific treatment services to adjudicated delinquent female youth
- IRB approved
Data collection

- **Recruitment**
  - Key informants
  - Representative cross-section of Direct and Indirect Care Workers
  - All girls 18 and over invited; girls under 18 with parental/guardian informed consent

- Series of structured focus groups and interviews

- 4 staff interviews, 3 staff focus groups, 3 youth focus groups

- Conducted by 2 researchers in October
Interview/focus group Protocol

- Sanctuary Model training
- Implementation of the model
- Applicability of the model
- Impressions of changes in youth outcomes
- Notes taken, recordings transcribed, results analyzed using phenomenological approach
Sample characteristics

- 17 out of 38 employees (45%)
- 21 out of 34 youth (62%)
Findings

- Consistent themes in implementation and impact
- Training
  - Variability in staff training due to turnover
  - Youth trained during orientation
Findings: Implementation

- Model introduced to stabilize organization in crisis
- Strong support by new leadership
- Model supported existing principles of leaders; provided necessary “blueprint”
- Individual staff play key roles
- Importance of staff investment and role-modeling; parallel process with youth
- High level of staff commitment to youth; yet challenges with unfilled positions
Implementation cont’d

- Youth take a while to engage in the model
- Various processes to reinforce model
  - Mentoring program
  - Frequent use of Sanctuary Model language
  - Participation in Steering (Operations) Committee
  - Provided some choice of activities
  - Nominating staff for demonstrating Sanctuary Model behavior
- Challenges with some rules (e.g., length of calls)
Findings: Applicability

- General strong endorsement of model
- Provides a structured method to:
  - Change culture to increase voice of staff and girls
  - Create a restorative culture
  - Engage both staff and youth
- Improve overall functioning of facility
- Lack of consensus about applicability to male youth
Findings: Outcomes

- Reduced restraints and other retraumatization
- Safer environment for staff and youth
- Staff more responsive to input from youth
- Many staff and youth expressed using or intending to use precepts from model outside the facility
Limitations

- Small qualitative exploratory study
- Cross-sectional; retrospective
- Single agency
Conclusion

- Trauma-informed organizational culture change can be implemented in a girls maximum security facility
- Importance of leadership combined with a “blueprint”
- Importance of staff investment and role-modeling
- May take time for youth to adjust to a different culture; not all youth “bought in”
Implications

- Recognize potential impact of restorative cultures on youth with histories of trauma
- Further explore the role leadership plays in trauma-informed organizational change; how to support leadership
- Explore how to support youth in transitioning to different types of communities
References


Thank you and
Questions?
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