
ANNOTATION:

DESIGN: The South Australia Juvenile Justice (SAJJ) project collected data on offenders and victims in 1998 and followed them up and interviewed them a year later in 1999. Eighty-nine conferences were observed in the metropolitan area of Adelaide and sizeable country towns of Port Augusta and Whyalla.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS: Eligible offenses included personal crimes of violence and property offenses involving personal victims or community victims such as schools and churches. Forty-four percent of the conferences dealt with personal crimes of violence and 56% property crimes. Twenty percent of the victims were organizational victims. Twenty-eight percent of the victims in conferences were under 18. Seven-nine percent of the offenders were male and 49 percent of the victims were male. Of the personal violence victims, close to half required medical attention. The median out of pocket expense of property victims was $400. In half the conferences offenders and victims knew each other. Twelve percent of conferences involved Aboriginal offenders and seven percent more involved offenders of other racial or ethnic minority groups.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONFERENCES:
In 74% of the conferences the victim was present. Restorativeness was measured by several items tapping “the degree to which offenders and victims recognized the other and were affected by the other.” Restorativeness was found to be present in about 30% to 50% of the conferences and most solidly present in about a third of them.
About a third of the offenders and victims had not thought about what they wanted to say to the other prior to the meeting.
“On the whole conferences are calm events, and participants are civil towards each other.”

FAIRNESS: 80-95% of victims and offenders said they were treated fairly and had a say in the agreement.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS:
Reduction in victim anger. Over 75% of victims felt angry towards the offender pre-conference; 44% after the conference, and 39% a year later.
Reduction in victim fear of offender. 40% Frightened of offender pre-conference; 25% after, 18% a year later.
Increase in positive orientation toward the offender: 8% pre conference, 38% after the conference, 44% a year later.

SATISFACTION: 90% of the offenders and 73% of the victims were either satisfied or very satisfied with how their case was handled.

GROUP CONFERENCING
JUVENILE
MIXED CRIME TYPES
SATISFACTION, FAIRNESS, IMPACT
VICTIM, OFFENDER
SURVEY, OBSERVATION
NEW ZEALAND