
NOT AVAILABLE ON LINE

ANNOTATION:

STUDY DESIGN: The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act of 1989 had a major goal of diverting children and young people from the formal court systems. Four metro sites and one provincial site were studied to explore changes in decision-making as youth moved from encounters with police to youth court. The present summary focuses on Family Group Conferencing, which was established as a primary diversion program. All cases involving children and young people coming through the police were studied for a three-month period. One hundred and sixty two of 203 FGCs were observed. Interviews included 176 parents, 157 young people, and 81 victims.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS AND CONFERENCES: Those referred to FGC tended to be older offenders with histories of prior offenses who had committed more serious offenses. About 66% of the FGC referrals had medium seriousness scores. 83% of the sample had priors. The average number of persons attending a conference was nine. In 86% of the cases, matters were resolved in one meeting. The typical conference lasted an hour or so. Only 41% of the victims attended FGC, typically because they did not have enough lead time to make arrangements. While youth generally felt that decisions were made by their families, only 16% said that they themselves had “specifically been involved in making the decision.”

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES: Apologies (70% of cases), youth doing work in the community (58%); reparation (29%); work/education program (25%); and referred to counseling/support (21%). For only 5% of the cases was there no clear evidence of accountability.

SATISFACTION: Eighty-four percent of the youth and 85% of parents were satisfied with the outcomes of the FGC. Although 95% of the cases recorded an agreed upon outcome, only 40% of participating victims were satisfied.

FOLLOW UP AND RECIDIVISM: Eighteen percent of the cases were reconvened within three to four months for monitoring purposes. Forty-eight percent of those referred to FGCs had reoffended within six months. There were numerous differences across sites and cultures.

DIVERSION: Country-wide, the Act establishing FGCs has had a major impact on the handling of children and young people. Prior to the Act 10,000 to 13,000 youth were processed in court annually. For the year 1990, 2,587 were handled by the courts. Similarly, the sentence of imprisonment or corrective training went from 262 cases in 1988 to 112 in 1990.

GROUP CONFERENCING

JUVENILE

MIXED CRIME TYPES

PARTICIPATION RATES, SATISFACTION, RECIDIVISM, RESTITUTION, DIVERSION

VICTIM, OFFENDER

SURVEY, OBSERVATION, RECORD DATA

AUS