



“HIGH NEEDS” YOUTH

Myths vs. Facts

(Updated: August 2013)

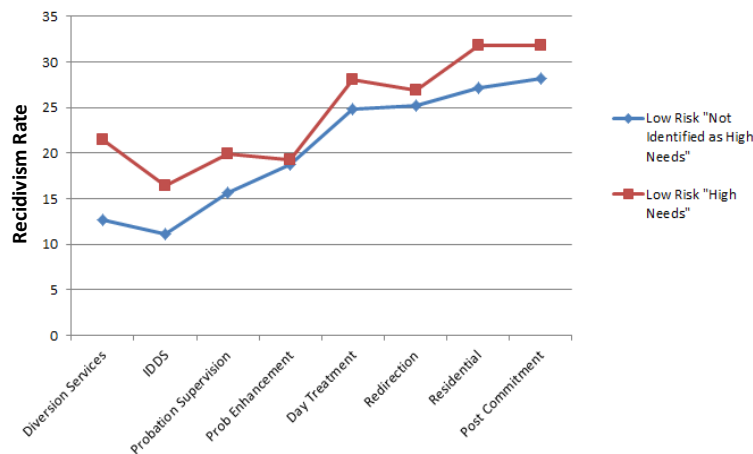
Myth: “High Needs” youth are better served in deep-end or intensive placements, such as residential facilities

Fact: Front-end community-based services are more effective for low risk to re-offend youth that are “high needs”

Recent (2012) Florida Department of Juvenile Justice data shows low risk to re-offend youth have better outcomes in terms of decreased rates of re-offending when served in front-end community-based placements, such as diversion and probation supervision, rather than deeper-end community-based placements, such as day treatment programs and intensive family therapy, or residential facilities. Placing a low risk “high needs” youth deeper than probation supervision was associated with increasing re-offending by roughly 1 ½ times.

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice supports adherence to the Risk Principle which dictates the intensity and duration of services provided should mimic the risk level of the youth, with higher risk youth receiving more intense services for a longer period of time. Research shows intensive services provided to low risk youth are iatrogenic, meaning they have the unintended consequence of actually increasing recidivism likelihood. The risk of the youth, based on validated assessment, should guide the restrictiveness level of the placement, as risk identifies risk to public safety. The needs of the youth should be addressed by appropriately matched services, regardless of the placement level.

Recidivism Rate for Low Risk Youth by "Needs" Level by Placement Type



REFERENCES

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2003). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct, 3rd edition*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. (2013). The Risk Principle. Briefing Report. Available on-line at: <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/docs/research2/briefing-report-the-risk-principle.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.