Reducing Isolation in Youth Facilities TTA Program

Applying Positive Youth Development (PYD) Strategies to Reduce the Use of Isolation and Ensure Youth Safety

June 5, 2018
1 pm – 2:30 pm EST
RIYF-TTA Program: A CCAS Project
Guidelines and Housekeeping

- Everyone muted
- Type questions anytime. Questions will be answered during the Q&A session at the end of webinar
- Webinar is being recorded – link to audio recording and Power Point presentation will be sent following the webinar
RIYF-TTA Consulting Team

Shannon Myrick
Development Implementation Manager
Oregon Youth Authority

Ruth Rovezzi
Deputy Commissioner for Operations
Massachusetts Department of Youth Services
Todays Objectives...

• To understand the basic tenets of Positive Youth Development

• To understand adolescent brain development

• To understand the critical role of the staff to youth relationship in preventing the use of isolation
Today's Objectives (continued)...

• To provide participants with concrete strategies for helping staff feel confident and capable of managing negative youth behaviors without the use of isolation

• To provide steps to consider when implementing new strategies to shift the facility and/or agency culture towards using alternative tools
Supporting the Oregon Youth Authority’s mission to protect the public and reduce crime by holding youth in our care and custody accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.
Positive Youth Development?

- Grounded in decades of research.

- Requires an approach of working with young people that focuses on *development*, not just problems and deficits.

- Comprehensive way of thinking of the development of adolescents and the factors that help them develop successfully.
Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice

• Requires the belief that youth can be *accountable* and *strengthened* at the same time

• Understands that PYD is not something we do *to* youth, but something we do *with* youth

• Views youth as *resources* to develop, not *problems* to be fixed
Difference between PYD and PYO

• Positive Youth Outcomes
  • Youth are healthy and confident
  • Youth are physically and emotionally safe
  • Youth are connected and engaged
  • Youth are educated and work ready

• Positive Youth Development
  • Strategies we use to work with youth that help us achieve these outcomes
  • A philosophy that youth are resources to be developed
Creating environments for healthy development

- Healthy brain development
- People matter
- Environments matter
Healthy Brain Development

• The Amygdala
  • The emotional command center
  • Develops earlier than the prefrontal cortex

• The Prefrontal Cortex
  • Reasoning, decision making, self control
  • May develop up until age 25
What is complex trauma?

• Complex trauma has been defined as exposure to traumatic stressors at an age or in a context that:
  • Compromises secure attachment with primary caregivers
  • Ability to self-regulate emotions

• Increases risk of delinquency
Effects of complex trauma on adolescent behavior...

• Exposure to complex trauma is likely to increase:
  • stress reactivity
  • anger
  • impulsivity

• While also reducing the youth’s ability to:
  • inhibit these reactions
  • engage in effective problem solving
People Matter

Humans NEED connection!

• Caring and supportive relationships build resiliency

• Social supports help us build strengths

• Growth occurs when individuals feel valued
What’s up with teens and young adults...

Psychosocial Developmental Tasks

• Forming an identity

• Developing a sense of self and autonomy

• Developing attachments and intimate relationships
What’s up with us as adults...

Psychosocial Developmental Tasks

• Developing attachments and intimate relationships

• Productivity and Personal Growth

• Our developing lives and families
What is our lens?
We believe in the human capacity to change, that every person matters, and that every interaction is an opportunity for positive intervention. This is especially true for our youth. Every youth deserves to be supported, strengthened, and successful. We foster this environment with individualized attention and positive youth development. We are Oregon’s Juvenile Justice System. We believe in the human capacity to change, that every person matters, and that every interaction is an opportunity for positive intervention. This is especially true for our youth. Every youth deserves to be supported, strengthened, and successful. We foster this environment with individualized attention and positive youth development. We are Oregon’s Juvenile Justice System.

Youth as victims? Youth as villains? Youth as resources?

We believe in the human capacity to change, that every person matters, and that every interaction is an opportunity for positive intervention. This is especially true for our youth. Every youth deserves to be supported, strengthened, and successful. We foster this environment with individualized attention and positive youth development. We are Oregon’s Juvenile Justice System.

Trauma
Need to belong
Great sense of humor

Criminal Behavior
Developing Brain

Close to grandma
Loves to read
Good at sports

Resources?

VILLAIN
VICTIM

Trauma

Need to belong

Developing Brain

Close to grandma
Loves to read
Good at sports

Resources?
The Victim Lens

• People behave negatively because of an underlying disturbance
  • Fundamentally different in psychological and emotional makeup

• People cannot change without therapy or treatment

• Primary strategy is therapeutic intervention
The Villain Lens

• People behave negatively because of impulsivity, lack of self-control, and absence of punishment
  • Fundamentally different motivations and impulses

• People cannot change without strict discipline and threat of punishment

• Primary strategy is deterrence and punishment
The Resource Lens

• People behave negatively because of normative response to an unmet need
  • For youth; needs for status, belonging, autonomy and excitement

• People cannot change without access to skill-building opportunities and support

• Primary strategy is skill development, attachment, and belonging
Environments Matter

If a youth’s environment includes:

• High stress
• Little or no control
• No caring or supportive relationships

What part of the brain is being activated?
What does this mean for development?
Environments Matter

If a youth’s environment includes:
  • Low stress
  • Freedom to make reasonable choices
  • Opportunities for engagement
  • Caring and supportive relationships

What part of the brain is being activated?
What does this mean for development?
Relationship between Power Assertion and Stress Responses
When we see youth as resources...

Our primary strategies become...

1. Skill Development
2. Attachment
3. Engagement
Creating the Brain Gym!
The Foundation: Safety and Security
Digging deeper...Safety and Security

When individuals feel emotionally and psychologically safe and secure, they may:

• Feel less anxiety or stress
• Understand what is happening
• Feel communicated with and aware
• Feel comfortable expressing emotions or ideas without fear of retaliation
Caring and Supportive Relationships
Digging deeper...
Caring and Supportive Relationships

• **Caring**-
  • Sense of being concerned or interested.

• **Supportive**-
  • Willingness to act as a resource.

• **Relationship**-
  • An association defined and mutually understood boundaries that are clear and appropriate.
Digging deeper...

Caring and Supportive Relationships

• Characterized by...
  • Honest and authentic interactions
  • Interactions that are focused on meeting individuals where they are
  • Clear and consistent communication that is meaningful and supportive
Strategies for Supporting Development

• Attachment and Relationships
  • Difficulty developing a strong and healthy attachment
  • Difficulty controlling and expressing emotions
  • Difficulty with friendships and authority figures

• Skill development opportunity
  • Learn characteristics of healthy relationships
  • Emotion labeling and regulation
  • Establish opportunities to develop trust
Strategies for Supporting Development

• Body and Brain
  • Brain development is impaired
  • Body responses may be hypersensitive
  • Chronic physical discomfort or pain (without necessarily being aware it’s not normal)

• Skill development opportunity
  • Work on paraphrasing each others responses for clarity and communication
  • Encourage “body-scanning” to get in touch with physical sensations that may indicate hyperarousal
  • Train on meditation/mindfulness
Strategies for Supporting Development

- Emotional Responses
  - May be unpredictable or explosive
  - May show a variety of responses; sadness, anger, avoidance
  - May become easily overwhelmed

- Skill development opportunity
  - Self-soothing activities (remember, they have to develop the ability to regulate)
  - Stress-management (making a list, taking a few deep breaths, focus on one thing at a time)
Strategies for Supporting Development

• Behavior
  • Easily triggered
  • Poor self-regulation
  • May appear oppositional or detached (some of the “faces” of fear)
  • Increased high-risk behavior

• Skill development opportunity
  • Raise awareness of triggers and ways to create healthy boundaries
  • Emotion regulation skills
  • Strategies to communicate “emotion overload” (flipping the lid, take 5)
  • Cause and effect of individual behavior through hypothetical scenarios (role play)
Strategies for Supporting Development

- Cognition
  - Problems with thinking, reasoning, problem-solving
  - Struggle to think ahead or anticipate the future
  - Focused on basic survival
  - Difficulty sustaining attention

- Skill development opportunity
  - Activities that are balanced in planning and active participation
  - Gradual increases in time required to focus
  - Opportunities for hypothetical thinking (how might we solve this problem?)
Strategies for Supporting Development

• Self-concept and future orientation
  • Lack self-worth
  • Lack hope
  • May feel they are not in control of their future

• Skill development opportunity
  • Activities to build self-efficacy and self-esteem
  • Self-care skills that will bring a sense of value to oneself
  • Developing reasonable goals and a sense of purpose
  • Identifying what is within one’s control and what is not
Supporting Staff in Skill Development

• Create new language

• Reinforce the new mindset

• Provide opportunities for skill development or practice
  • Parallel process for staff and youth

• Confident, Competent and Capable
  • Training and ongoing coaching
  • Structured activities with goals
  • Ensure staff have the resources they need to be successful
High Expectations and Accountability
Digging Deeper...
High Expectations and Accountability

• Expectations
  • A belief that someone will or should achieve something
  • Reasonable and rising

• Accountability
  • A quality or state characterized by a willingness to accept responsibility for their actions
  • Influenced by interactions and environment
Every Interaction,
Every Time
Operationalizing PYD....
MA DYS – Key Pieces

• Youth engagement in programming is important to safety and positive youth outcomes.
• Solicit youth input where possible on programming opportunities.
• Include staff interests and options to use volunteers to enhance menu of options.
• What experiences can we offer youth they have not previously experienced?
The Essentials....

• Focus on youth outcomes
• Incentive based behavior management
• DBT as skill development tool for youth
• Individual Service Plan used as response to unacceptable behavior
• Release from confinement strategy
• Role of staff as advocate
Skills for Staff

• Relationships that are developmentally appropriate between adults and young people add to overall safety in a facility.

• Staff need guidance on the balance of developing relationships and maintaining appropriate boundaries.

• Provide a framework for meaningful conversations between adults and youth.
From the Search Institute:

Actions that contribute to positive connections:

• **Express Care** - Staff are present, invest time in youth, show interest and are dependable.

• **Challenge Growth** - Staff hold youth accountable, make clear youth can live up to their potential, inspire them to see future possibilities.

• **Provide Support** - Be an example for youth, advocate for them, provide feedback.
From the Search Institute:

• Share Power - Treat youth fairly, solicit their opinions, respond to their needs, collaborate to help them reach goals. Include them in decision making at an appropriate level.

• Expand Possibilities - Expand their concept of what is possible, connect youth to opportunities and people, help youth explore new ideas, experiences and places.
Most Frequent Use of Isolation
(informal poll of RIYF Cohort participants)

• Fights/assaults/physical aggression
• Threatening posturing and/or behaviors by youth (imminent injury appears likely)
• Destruction of property
• Cooling off period to ensure safety of youth
• Consequence for rule violation
MA - Managing youth violence

• All staff trained in defensive dis-engagement and restraint technique

• All staff trained in de-escalation

• Use of mediation to involve youth in problem solving

• Importance of communication in managing gang relationships and previous conflicts between youth
Using PYD tools to effectively interact with youth to reduce the use of isolation
Prevention: Ways to Avoid Dysregulation

• Identify reasonable choices that youth can make in moments of stress
  • Having a sense of control will help regulate emotions and behaviors.
    • “We need to move you away from this situation. Would you like to take a walk outside with a staff person or sit with someone in a quieter space?”

• Give youth opportunities to learn regulation skills when they are not escalated, and give them space to use them during stressful periods.
  • Self-awareness of emotional state
    • Example: Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain and Flipping your lid
    • Link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw
Avoiding confinement when a youth becomes escalated

*Remember:*

- Staff need to develop situational awareness
- Intervening early is critical
- Traditional responses are more likely to continue the escalation
- Give reasonable choices whenever possible
  - E.g., it seems like we might need some space, do you want to take a walk with another staff or take a seat in another room with someone and talk
Specific strategies when you become escalated…

• Use verbal de-escalation

• Ask youth if they need to take a minute

• Capitalize on the skills the youth has and encourage them to label their emotions and try to re-regulate on their own; remind youth of skills and tools they have to avoid escalating their behavior.

• Remove the audience if possible

• Communicate with co-workers for support

• Proactive escort away from group towards room
After the event….
Release from confinement (MA)

• Release from confinement is managed by residential supervisor on location.

• Guidelines for release provided to include in the moment assessment of youth and risk to escalate.

• Release from confinement does not mean immediate return to group, based on individual situation and need for repair.
• Staff observe behavior and begin processing event with youth.

• Supervisor directs response of team based on relationships and level of engagement.

• Youth must process the event and speak to their role, identify options to avoid re-occurrence.

• Based in DBT-use mini-chain activity.
MA - Release from Confinement (continued)

With resources available, create individual release plan:

• May leave youth in room with door open to continue processing with a staff member

• May have clinical staff involved or member of leadership

• Create contact for safety

• May take youth out of room but not rejoin group

• May use mediation with other parties impacted
Massachusetts DYS

Assaults, Restraints, Room Confinements — DYS State-Run Programs only

- State-Run Programs Youth-on-Staff Assaults
- State-Run Programs Restraints
- State-Run Programs Room Confinements
- Assaults Trend
- Restraint Trend
- Room Confinement Trend

Graph showing trends in assaults, restraints, and room confinements for DYS State-Run Programs from 2014 to 2016.
Balancing Safety and Security at MA DYS
Behavior Management at MA DYS

• Behavior Management system has a balance of accountability and incentives

• Incorporates Dialectical Behavioral Therapy concepts – i.e. Emotional regulation and distress tolerance

• Staff work as advocates for individual youth through check-ins and individual time together
Behavior Management at MA DYS (continued)

• Problematic behavior is addressed through repair activities and individualized programming.

• Program team develops Individualized Service Plan for youth who have sustained problems with behavior, with input from youth and family on triggers for behaviors and incentives that support positive change.
Behavior Management at MA DYS (continued)

• Use community meeting to bring youth and staff together to discuss concerns.

• Look at adult behavior through the lens of fairness as it is perceived by youth.

• Include youth and staff input in developing incentives/rewards menu.

• Some incentives can be low/no cost. Recognition is free!
Behavior Management at MA DYS (continued)

• Youth earn incentive points/opportunities with positive participation in programming.

• Youth lose the opportunity to earn incentives with negative behavior and need to make repairs to the program community before they can use any previously earned incentives and before they regain the opportunity to earn more.
Behavior Management at MA DYS (continued)

• Repairs are categorized by the severity of the rule violation. Violence against other youth or staff are the most serious.

• Youth have menu of incentives and repairs and make choices based on the situation.

• Serious rule infractions may prompt an Incident Response Hearing, where senior staff participate in incident review with youth.
Behavior Management at MA DYS (continued)

• Some infractions trigger an extension of time in placement or notification to court or additional charges.

• All youth are informed of rights and consequences at time of intake and throughout placement.
Implementation:

Lessons learned from the field
Considerations for Implementation

• Adopting PYD into our work has been a cultural shift that is ongoing. It has its challenges.

• It moves us to challenge our thinking about what justice-involved “deserve”. We want to get to the place where they deserve what every child deserves: opportunities to build skills and competencies to become successful adults.
Considerations for Implementation

• Staff need to understand the nuances of strength-based approach.

• Rewarding positive behavior is not condoning negative behavior.

• Survey what resources you can deploy to enhance programming. Who are your natural partners?
• Which team members are early adopters?
Considerations for Implementation

• What is your marketing strategy in rolling out a change? Where is there resistance?

• Institutional safety is based on young people being engaged and feeling safe and respected.

• Start with small wins, bigger changes take time and patience.
Parting Words of Wisdom

• Be intentional and go slowly.

• Remember, resistance is for a reason, so find out why.

• Celebrate small successes.

• Stay focused on the vision and allow people to learn as you go.
Thank you….

Mike Dempsey
Executive Director CJCA

Sharon Pette,
Effective System Innovations, LLC
Consultant for Reducing Isolation in Youth Facilities Initiative
Sharon@rapidesi.com
www.rapidesi.com