

Guidebook to Elements of Successful Programs To Reduce Juvenile Justice Recidivism, Delinquency and Violence

**Developed for
The Community Services Division,
King County Department of Community and Human Services
And
The King County Juvenile Justice Evaluation Work Group**

This guidebook was developed to help local youth-serving nonprofits and government agencies evaluate their programs to see how they compare to elements found in the best programs being implemented across the U.S. Its research¹ is based on meta analyses of evaluations of hundreds of programs. Page one of the Guidebook follows and describes its parameters.

It has been implemented in a process designed by Bill Leon, Ph.D., of Geo Education & Research (an evaluation consulting firm in the Seattle area). Bill managed the development of the Guidebook and wrote most of the indicators used to operationalize the elements². Bill also developed a workbook and coaching tool called The Program Assessment and Improvement Plan (funded by King County and the City of Seattle) that helps organizations use the Guidebook to assess and later re-assess their progress toward becoming more effective at juvenile intervention efforts. In the process they develop action plans to guide their program improvement efforts and receive assistance in addressing needs.

Use of the Guidebook and Assessment Plan has been funded by Reinvesting in Youth (RIY), a multi-jurisdictional initiative working to change the effectiveness and funding of juvenile justice programs.³ Bill and his colleagues have been coaching many local organizations through the Elements of Successful Programs process and have been providing technical assistance to help them strengthen their evaluation efforts. The work is seen by many as very effective and as a model for addressing other types of community intervention efforts where numerous approaches by multiple organizations are common (e.g., dealing with school dropouts, literacy, homelessness, mental health needs) and where common guidelines for improving effectiveness can be found.

For more information on the Guidebook, the Assessment Plan and their use please contact:

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1 The research and writing was conducted mostly by Nancy Ashley of Heliotrope. The Community Services Division of King County, Washington funded the Guidebook (see www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/Youth&Family/index.htm).

2 Marc Bolan of Organizational Research Services also assisted and helped with implementation.

3 See <http://www.seattle.gov/humanservices/fys/ReinvestingInYouth/default.htm>. RIY seeks to move our juvenile justice system from a model based on punishment and incarceration to a coordinated, community-based system of cost-effective prevention and early intervention.

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The Guidebook to Elements of Successful Programs is designed to support a new way of using research to help programs that serve youth involved in the juvenile justice system reduce recidivism. It offers program staff and funders a rigorously-researched strategy to boost the effectiveness of these programs, which is complementary to increased use of specific proven or model programs. The approach outlined in the Guidebook can fill gaps in services where proven programs do not exist, are not affordable, or are not appropriate for the youth needing services. This approach also contributes to strengthening programs already operating in the community, and avoids the cost of replacing programs that are working.ⁱ

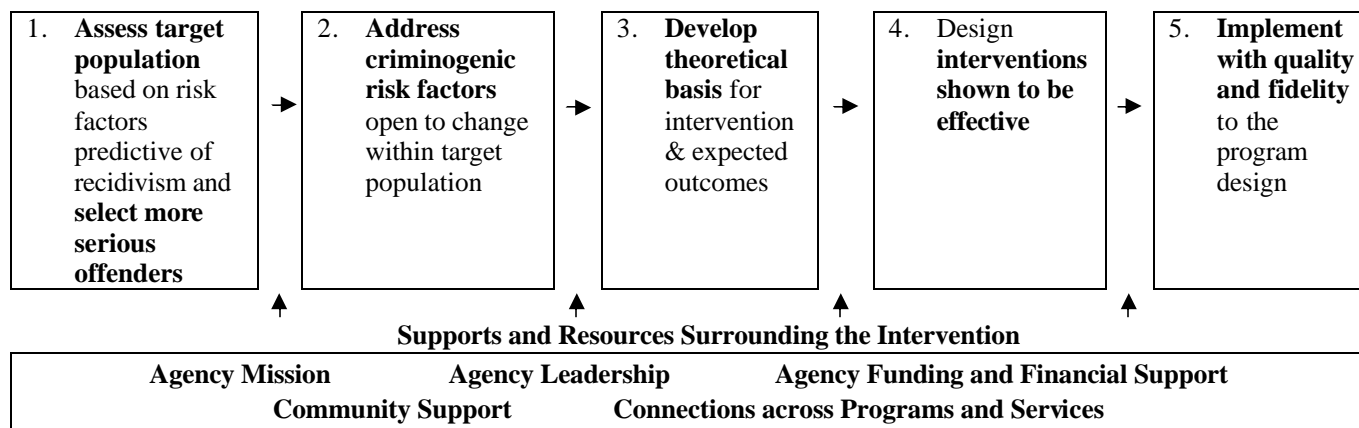
There is enormous variability in the effectiveness of different types of programs for seriously delinquent youth. The most effective programs, implemented well, can reduce recidivism by 40 per cent or more,ⁱⁱ whereas some programs *increase* the rate of subsequent offenses. It is therefore imperative that providers and funders know as much as they can about what works and what doesn't.

This project arose from the requests of providers and other parties interested in becoming more knowledgeable about the factors that make a program effective for reducing repeat criminal offenses committed by youth. Such programs include job training and placement, intensive case management, skill building, therapy, academic improvement programs, and more.

The Guidebook is a work in progress. As it is used by agencies and organizations, and as new research emerges, it will undoubtedly need to be revised and updated.

The research on which this Guidebook is based strongly points to the conclusion that any intervention or treatment designed to reduce delinquency/recidivism/violence among juveniles must contain five dimensions that are logically linked together.^{iii iv v} Programs must also have sufficient organizational and community support.^{vi} The five major dimensions and the essential supports and resources can be illustrated as follows:

Five Major Dimensions of Successful Programs



ⁱ Howell, James C. *Preventing & Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003, pp. 220-223.

ⁱⁱ Lipsey, Mark W. and Wilson, David B. *Effective Intervention for Serious Juvenile Offenders: A Synthesis of Research*. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.). *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998, p. 333.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Promoting Public Safety Using Effective Interventions with Offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Workshop Materials (overheads and handouts on "what works" with offenders), 2000, available at <http://www.nicic.org/Library/016296>

^{iv} Howell, James C. *Preventing & Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003. pp. 212-213.

^v Mackenzie, Doris L. *Criminal Justice and Crime Prevention*. In Sherman, Lawrence W. et al (Eds.). *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1997, p. 9-23,

^{vi} *Promoting Public Safety Using Effective Interventions with Offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Workshop Materials (overheads and handouts on "what works" with offenders), *CPAI Area 6: Other*, 2000, available at <http://www.nicic.org/Library/016296>