Evidence-based practice is at the heart of Nevada’s juvenile justice reform under AB 472 which establishes policies for reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. Juvenile court involved youth, their families, and their communities have a right to know the extent to which court-imposed programs and interventions are effective. AB 472 established the Evidence-Based Program (EBP) Resource Center to support the implementation of evidence-based programs and practices. The EBP Resource Center contract was awarded to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

EBP 101 – What does evidence-based mean?

The juvenile justice system is designed to hold youth accountable, maintain public safety, and provide youth with opportunities for rehabilitation. Youth are referred to programs to acquire new skills and competencies while juvenile justice professionals use practices like case planning and Motivational Interviewing to support youth in the process. Over the past three decades, a substantial body of empirical knowledge has established which practices, interventions, and treatment approaches work most effectively to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth who have violated the law. These programs and practices are often referred to as “evidence-based.” In simple terms, an evidence-based program or practice is one that has been carefully studied and demonstrated effectiveness as opposed to those that may only be supported by anecdotal evidence.

Some juvenile justice professionals use a single definition of evidence-based, while others prefer a continuum of definitions based on the strength of the evidence and degree of effectiveness of the program or practice. The Strategic Plan Committee of the Nevada Juvenile Justice Oversight Commission is currently drafting a definition of evidence-based that will inform the use of evidence-based programs and practices across Nevada. Once the definition is approved, we will share it in a future email.

Evidence-based programs can be name brand curriculum that can be purchased, such as Aggression Replacement Training® (ART®) or Thinking for a Change® (T4C®), or locally-developed programs and practices that have demonstrated empirical effectiveness. Evidence-based practices include youth mentoring and assessing risk and needs using a validated risk/need assessment tool.

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Why choose EBPs?

Better outcomes for youth and families: Because evidence-based programs and practices have demonstrated effectiveness through research, they are more likely to result in positive outcomes than those that have not been researched.

Increased public safety: Recidivism decreases when a validated risk/needs assessment, like the Youth Level of Service (YLS), is used to develop a case plan and a range of effective interventions are available to match the identified criminogenic needs.

Cost savings: Implementing evidence-based programs can reduce costs associated with a reliance on out-of-home placement and court processing of offenders.

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Coming Up Next:

The Principles of Risk, Need, & Responsivity

Additional EBP Resources

We are eager to hear from you!

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