

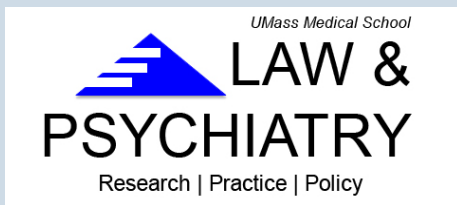


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# Promoting Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice Settings: What Do We Need to Know?

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# What is Positive Youth Development?

An intentional, prosocial approach that:

- ❖ engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive;
- ❖ recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and
- ❖ promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths."

-IWGYP, [youth.gov](http://youth.gov)

## A Positive Youth Development Research Agenda

*Prepared by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs*



# Positive Youth Development in Juvenile Justice

## Positive Youth Justice

briefing  
paper



BRIEFING PAPER

### STRENGTHENING YOUTH JUSTICE PRACTICES WITH DEVELOPMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRINCIPLES

The Annie E. Casey Foundation encourages the use of positive youth development concepts to support the reform and improvement of local youth justice practices. For the developmental approach to become more than an abstract framework or a philosophical perspective, practitioners need concrete policies and procedures that align youth justice with the science of adolescent development. This briefing paper describes the Positive Youth Justice model and assesses its potential as a tool for strengthening reform.

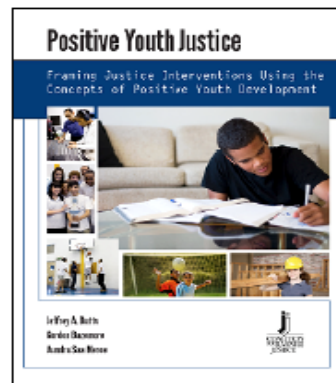
#### Introduction

Positive youth development (PYD) is a field of practice that applies lessons from the science of adolescent development to the routine practices of youth-serving organizations. The PYD approach encourages communities and agencies to build upon the positive assets of youth rather than simply reduce youth problems and treat youth deficits. It judges success by every youth's attainment of positive outcomes rather than their avoidance of negative outcomes. A PYD approach helps youth transition from adolescence to adulthood through the acquisition of pro-social skills and supportive relationships.

A developmental approach is appropriate for all adolescents, including those involved in the justice system. For justice-involved youth, PYD could be a key component in any broader strategy to reduce delinquency and ensure public safety. Of course, PYD is not a panacea. Youth affected by particular deficits, such as substance abuse, family violence, trauma, and mental health issues, may still require programs and practices that target

NOVEMBER 2014

Dr. Jeffrey A. Butts, Consultant



Butts, Jeffrey A., Gordon Bazemore, and Aundra Saa Meroe (2010). *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

“....applies lessons from the science of adolescent development to routine practices of youth-service organizations.”

### Two Core Assets:

#### 1. Learning/Doing

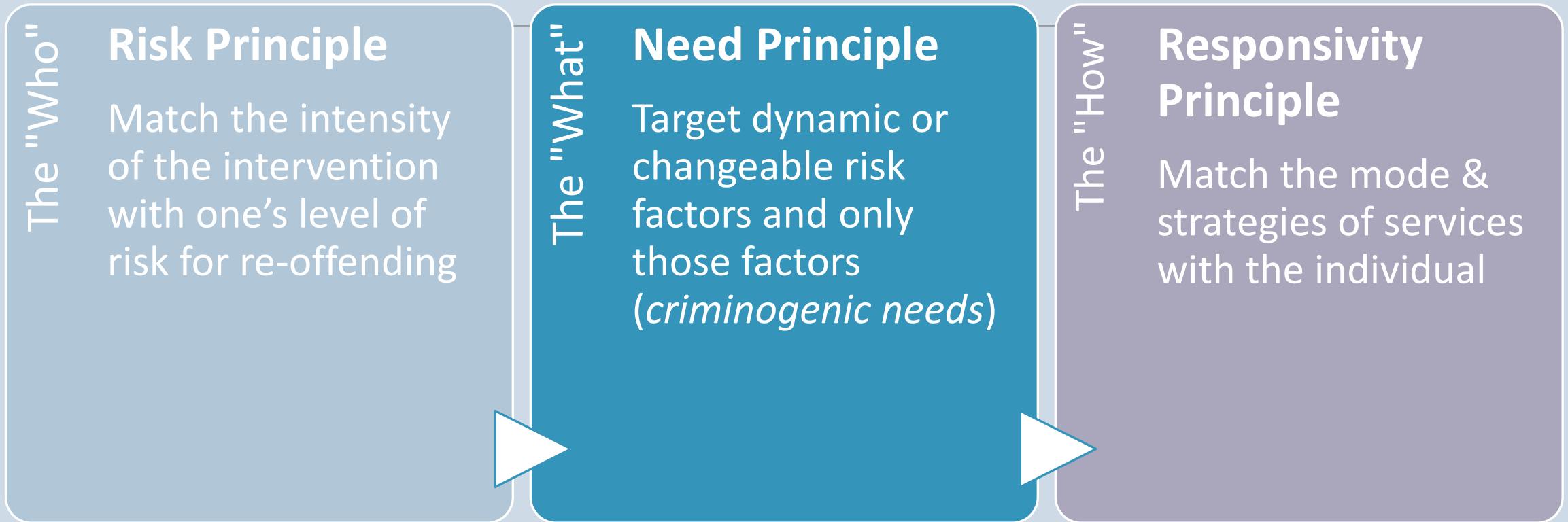
Developing new skills, roles/responsibilities

#### 2. Attaching/Belonging

Becoming active member of social groups; increase engagement

### How To Operationalize?

# Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Approach (Andrews & Bonta)



> 370 Studies (Andrews & Bonta, 2010)

**Strengths**  
**Specific Responsivity**



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**NIJ** | National Institute  
of Justice  
STRENGTHEN SCIENCE. ADVANCE JUSTICE.

# Optimizing Supervision and Service Strategies to Reduce Reoffending (*NIJ Protective Factors Project*)

**Investigators:** Gina Vincent, PhD, UMASS Chan Medical; Jennifer Skeem, PhD, UC Berkley; & Josh Weber, MPA, Council of State Governments Justice center

**Project Director:** Rachael Perrault, MA

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**Research Coordinators:** Lindsey Stevens, MA; Karlie Rice, MA;  
Lauren MacDowell, MA



**Justice Center**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

**Berkeley**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



# How to Operationalize PYJ and Maximize Case Planning?

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## 1. Relevance of Protective Factors/Strengths

- Which protective factors/strengths add value to case planning? (In other words, which ones are mostly closely linked to reductions in reoffending?)

## 2. Utility for Case Planning and Services

- Which Strengths-based services have the greatest value for recidivism reduction?

## 3. Developmental issues

- How do both of the above differ for youth at different developmental stages?

# Unanswered Questions for Case Planning

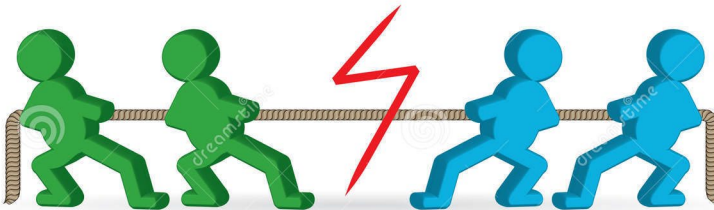
## 4. Risk-Need-Responsivity – competing or complementary?

- What is the value added to what POs already know about risk factors and risk reduction services?
- In other words, how do RNR and PYJ fit together in case planning?

Some speculation about additive value of strengths in case planning (de Vries Robbe & Willis, 2017)

- May ‘...alter the way in which frontline workers view and engage those in the criminal justice system’ (p 60).
- “...focusing on strengths in addition to risks also holds promise for improving the therapeutic alliance” (p.60)

# COMPETITION



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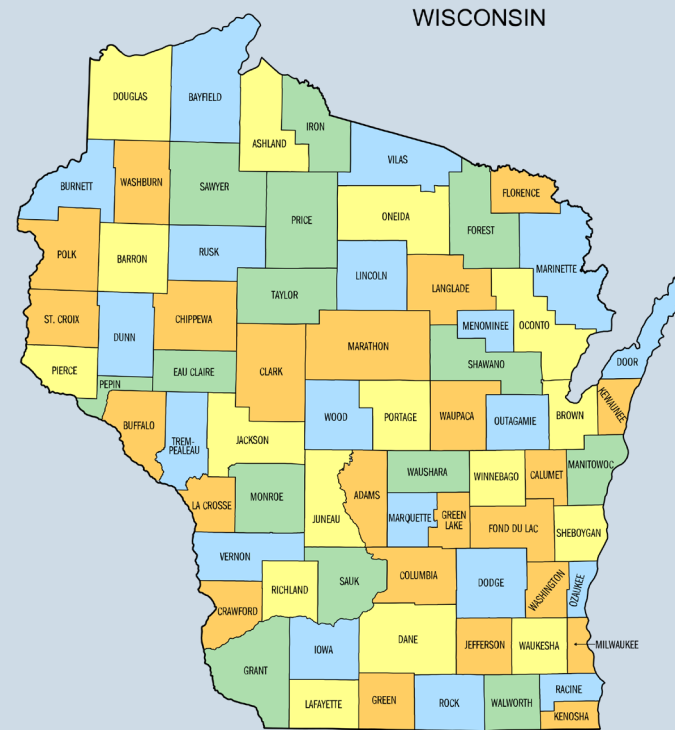
Hana Kruzikova | Dreamstime.com

# Protective Factors Project

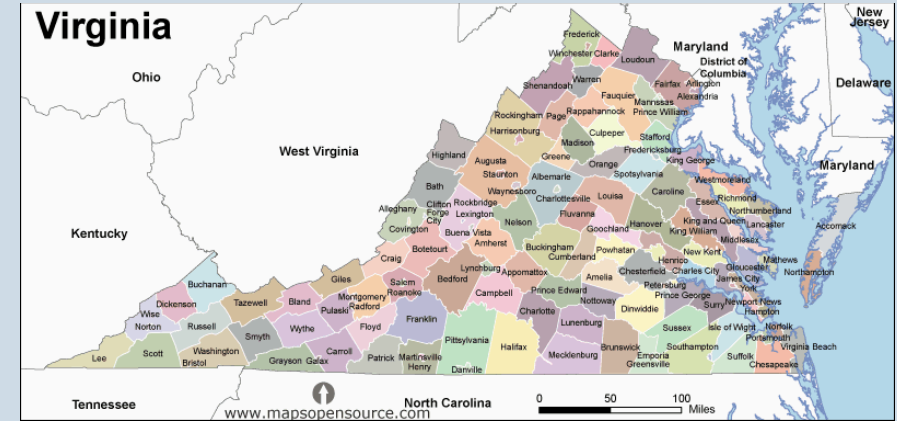
3 states; 5 Probation Probation Offices per State (15)



PA Juvenile Court Judges  
Commission  
YLS/CMI



WI Dept of Children & Families  
YASI



VA Dept of Juvenile Justice  
YASI



# NIJ Protective Factors Project Procedures

1. Implemented **Protective factor** survey – 15 probation offices (5 per state) to supplement the risk-needs assessments of strengths as part of their routine intake or assessment procedures
2. Expanded **service data tracking** in electronic case management systems
  - All services/activities/programs in which youth engage, regardless of payer or referrer
  - Especially strengths—based services & activities
3. Two samples of youth to examine value of a) risk factors vs protective factors in ‘prediction’ of recidivism, and b) risk reduction vs. strengths-based services in ‘reduction’ of recidivism
  - Archival (2017-2019) sample & New sample (July 2021 onward)
  - Examine recidivism **during AND after supervision**

# Definition & Relevance of Protective Factors/ Strengths

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# What Are Protective Factors/Strengths?

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## **Promotive Factor** (Farrington, Ttofi, & Piquero, 2016)

- Variable that predicts a low probability of offending
- If linearly related to delinquency ('opposites') = **both a risk factor and a promotive factor** (e.g., high school achievement)
- If not linear & % delinquency is high among the 'worst' scorers but not low among the 'worst' scorers = **risk factor only** (e.g., peer delinquency, impulsivity)
- If not linear & % delinquency is low among the 'best' scorers but not high among the 'worst' scorers = **promotive only** (e.g., neuroticism, intelligence)

# What Are Protective Factors/Strengths?

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## **Protective Factor** (Farrington, Ttofi, & Piquero, 2016)

- Interactive Protective Factor = Variable acts as a 'buffer' to nullify the effects of a risk factor
- Risk-Based Protective Factor = Variable associated w/low probability of offending among a high-risk group

## **Strengths**

- Positive attributes that are empirically related to a reduced probability of delinquency or recidivism (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2022); factors negatively related to recidivism
- Often used as a 'catch-all'

## **Practical Application?**

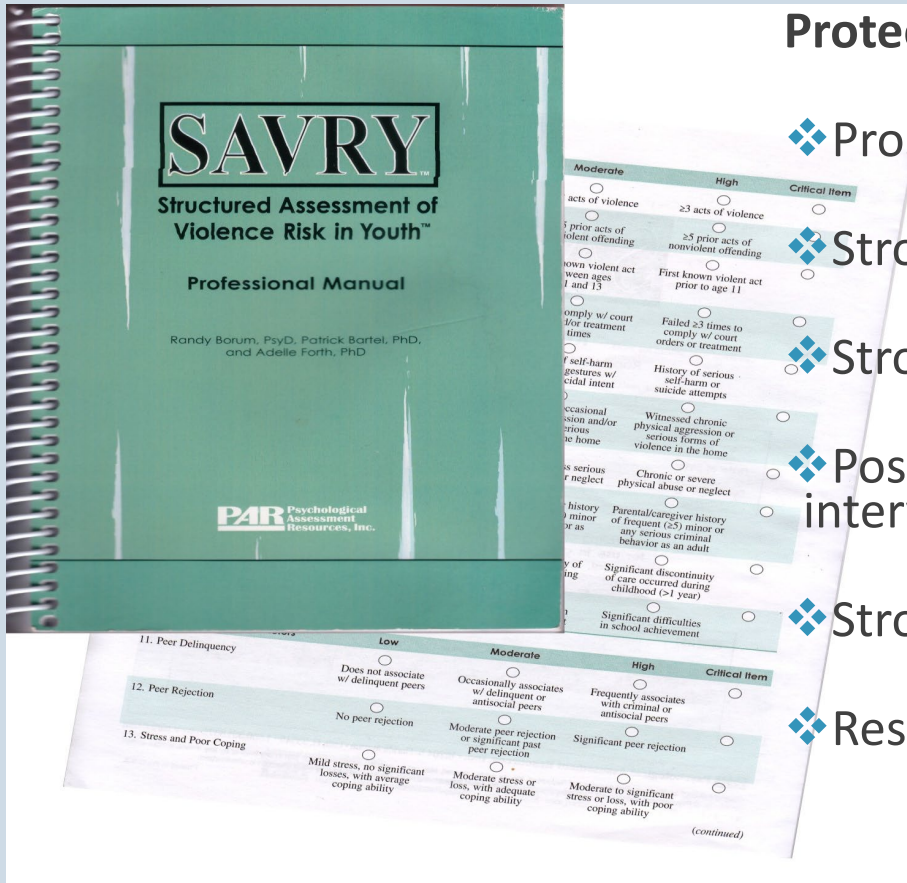
# Risk-Needs Assessment w/Protective Factor Scale

## Standalone PF Measures

- ❖ Structured Assessment of Protective Factors for Violence Risk-Youth Version (SAPROF-YV; de Vries Robbe)
- ❖ Protective factors for reducing juvenile reoffending (PFRJR; Barnes-Lee, 2020)
- ❖ Strengths Assessment Inventory – Youth Version (Rawana & Brownlee, 2010)

### Protective Factor Scale (6-items)

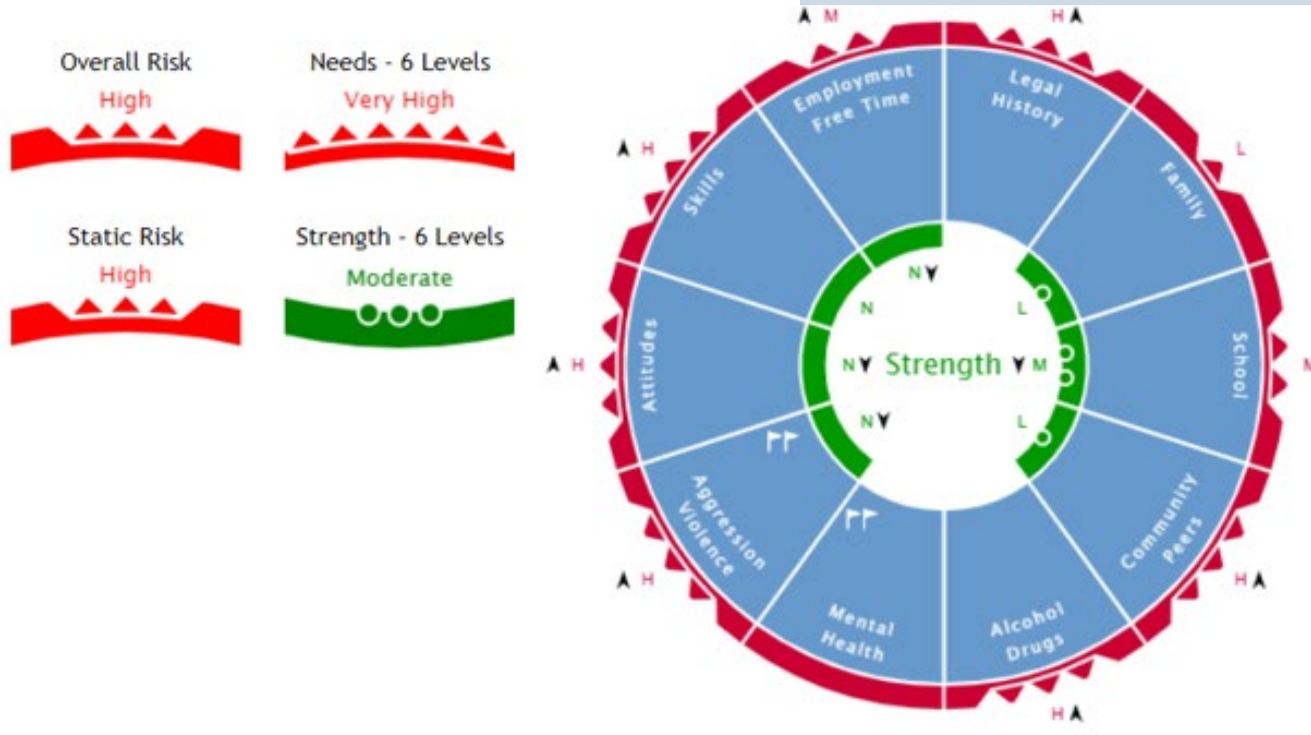
- ❖ Prosocial involvement
- ❖ Strong social support
- ❖ Strong attachment and bonds
- ❖ Positive attitude toward intervention/authority
- ❖ Strong commitment to school
- ❖ Resilient personality







# Risk-Needs Assessment w/Strengths



## Strength Domains


Most need (risk) domains have a converse strength score

- Aggression/Violence
- Community/Peers
- Alcohol and Drugs
- Attitudes
- Skills
- Family
- School
- Employment and Free Time


Brown et al. (2020) - Many strength scores had incremental predictive value over risk/needs but did not interact with needs (not a buffer) among youth

# PROMOTING REHABILITATION AMONG YOUTH ON PROBATION

## An Examination of Strengths as Specific Responsivity Factors

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Despite calls for strength-focused approaches in juvenile justice, there is little research on the role of strengths in probation case management. This is one of the first studies to examine whether strengths function as specific responsivity factors as proposed by the risk–need–responsivity model, through mediating and moderating effects, and findings lend preliminary support to this conceptualization. In a sample of 261 justice-involved youth, the relationship between strengths and recidivism was found to be partially mediated by the service-to-needs match rate, even while controlling for risk—suggesting that strengths have an important indirect effect on recidivism through their impact on youth’s engagement in and completion of services. Strengths, however, did not moderate the relationship between service-to-needs match and reoffending, suggesting that appropriately matched services are essential irrespective of a youth’s strength profile. Research corroborating these findings and examining the feasibility of front-line use of strengths information is warranted.

**Keywords:** risk–need–responsivity; rehabilitation; juvenile justice; protective factors; recidivism

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Youths’ strengths (as measured by the SAPROF-YV) mediated (but did not moderate) service-to-need match in the prediction of recidivism after accounting for youths’ level of risk.

### In other words:

- The more strengths youths had – the more likely they were to have dynamic risk areas/needs addressed (match)
- The match was associated with lower recidivism

**Concluded:** Strengths – Responsivity Factor

# Four Supplementary Protective Factors Included in Protective Factors Project

## Prosocial identity

Generally prosocial goals, values, and beliefs. Adolescence is a significant period for developing one's identity. Good Samaritan or 'tough guy/girl'?

## Prosocial Engagements

Increasing engagement in educational, employment, and community pursuits can be protective and is a primary goal of PYD. Includes measures of social responsibility

## Social Skills and Supports

Interpersonal skills and social relationships may protect against reoffending by increasing the likelihood of bonding with a more prosocial peer group.

## Self-control & Self-efficacy

- Ability to control one's emotional and behavioral impulses. Having a belief in one's own ability to handle life difficulties



# Research Question 1: What Matters Most For Lowering the Likelihood of Reoffending Among Youth and Does it Differ by Developmental Period? Young/Older

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## Reducing Risk Factors?

1. **Personality/Behavior** (e.g., **Aggression** and Emotion Regulation)
2. **Pro-crime attitudes/problems with authority**
3. **Negative Peers**
4. Substance Use
5. **Family/lack of parental monitoring & discipline**
6. **Education and Employment problems** – low achievement, low commitment, behavioral problems

## Enhancing Strengths?

1. **Prosocial identity**
2. **Prosocial Engagements – School/Work**
3. Prosocial Engagements - Belonging
4. **Social Skills & Positive Peers (romantic rels)**
5. Family Support
6. **Self-control**
7. Self-efficacy
8. **Employment/job skills and/or Education**

# Strengths-Based vs. Risk Reduction Services

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# What Are Risk-Reduction Services?

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Services designed to address or 'treat' dynamic risk factors (needs); focus on reducing risk factors to prevent recidivism. Examples:

- Anything cognitive behavioral therapy-based (e.g., Thinking for a change)
- Family services to improve conflict and parenting practices (e.g., MST, FFT, PMT)
- Substance use treatment
- Aggression-related (e.g., anger management, aggression replacement training)
- Gang-related interventions


# What Are Strengths-Based Services?


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Services promoting competence and skill building, prosocial engagements, and/or prosocial attachment. Examples:

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Prosocial Skills and Life-Skills Training
- Vocational training
- School-based interventions- extracurricular activities
- Voluntary Volunteer work
- Restorative programs w/victim mediation component

## Assessing the Association between Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Delinquent Behavior among Justice-Involved Young Men

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Sachiko Datta  
Princeton University

Laurence Steinberg  
Temple University and King Abdulaziz University

Paul J. Frick  
Louisiana State University and Australian Catholic University

Elizabeth Cauffman  
University of California, Irvine

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) have been found to promote positive youth development and protect against misconduct and minor delinquency. However, little research has examined whether ECA participation predicts delinquency among at-risk young men or considered how delinquent behavior, in turn, impacts ECA participation. This study examined extracurricular participation over three years in a sample of 1,216 justice-involved young men ( $M_{age} = 15.29$ ). Approximately half of the sample participated in ECA each year. A cross-lagged panel model was used to examine the bidirectional association between ECA participation and two types of delinquency, school misconduct and criminal offending. The results suggest that ECA participation did not consistently predict subsequent delinquency. Rather, justice-involved young men who engaged in more delinquency were less likely to participate in ECAs.

Approximately two-thirds of U.S. high school students participate in school-based after-school extracurricular activities (ECAs) such as sports, band, and other school-based clubs (NCES, 2012). Participation in ECAs may play an important role

indicate that participation in organized after-school ECAs is typically associated with lower levels of misconduct, antisocial behavior, and risk-taking.

The current study broadens the literature by examining ECA participation among justice-in-

Crossroads Study (N = 1,216 JJ youth)

Examined participation in school-based extracurricular activities and delinquency (self-reported measure) for over 3 years

**Finding:** Justice-involved males who engaged in more delinquency were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities rather than the other way around.

Young men who participated in these activities did not differ in subsequent delinquent activities

# Research Question 2: What Matters Most For Lowering the Likelihood of Reoffending Among Youth and Does it Differ by Developmental Period?

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## Strengths-based

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
  - Prosocial Skills and Life-Skills Training
  - Vocational training
  - School-based interventions-extracurricular activities
  - Voluntary Volunteer work
- Restorative programs w/victim mediation

## Risk-Reduction

- Anything cognitive behavioral therapy-based (e.g., Thinking for a change)
- Family services to improve conflict and parenting practices (e.g., MST, FFT, PMT)
- Substance use treatment
- Aggression-related (e.g., anger management, aggression replacement training)
- Gang-related interventions

# Anticipated Benefits of Study

## Benefit #1

Develop procedures for improving the recording of service delivery in JJ nationally

## Benefit #2

Identify methods for use of both risk and protective factors to inform and strengthen case planning, supervision, and selection of services to reduce recidivism

## Benefit #3

Conserve resources by optimizing these supervision strategies by age group



# Special Thank you

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Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges Commission

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Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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