The Risk-Needs-Responsivity approach

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Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) approach is an evidence-based intervention for youth who engage in delinquent behaviors. It is centered on the principle that the risk factors and needs of the youth should determine the appropriate strategies for addressing the factors that underline the delinquent behavior. The RNR approach focuses on rehabilitative interventions that target dynamic factors known to contribute to delinquent behavior. The approach is based on three key principles: risk, needs, and responsivity.

Key principles of RNR:

RISK

The level of service should match risk of recidivism. Higher risk youth should receive more intensive intervention than lower risk youth.

NEEDS

Needs should be identified and targeted for treatment. High risk youth should receive intensive treatment, while low risk youth should receive minimal or no treatment.

RESPONSIVITY

Interventions should be rehabilitative and tailored to learning styles, motivations, abilities, and strengths of the youth. They should address issues that affect responsivity (e.g. Mental Illness)

Research has shown this approach to be effective at reducing recidivism among youth and increasing chances for success. It has also been proven to be a cost-effective approach with a positive impact on public safety.



Determining a youth's level of risk

Research supports that youth are less likely to re-enter the legal system if the level and type of services provided are proportional to their risk level. A risk assessment is a tool used for assessing an individual's probability for reentering the legal system.

Risk assessments are validated through research and evaluation methods to ensure that they measure a broad range of risk factors known to contribute to delinquent behavior. They also assess personal factors, family circumstances, and strengths that influence treatment success and reduced recidivism.

There are a variety of validated risk assessment tools currently in use by many state and local jurisdictions throughout the United States (e.g. the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) and the Youth Level of Service (YLS) assessment).

Dynamic vs. static risk factors

Dynamic risk factors:

Factors that contribute to recidivism that are **amenable to change through appropriate interventions** and support

- Antisocial values/beliefs
- Impulsive behaviors
- · Increased anger and defiance
- · Lack of empathy/emotional regulation
- Anti-social peers
- Isolation from pro-social peers
- Poor school or work performance
- Substance use
- Family dysfunction (e.g. criminality, psychological problems, abuse/neglect)

Static risk factors:

Factors that contribute to recidivism are *not* amendable to change through treatment

- Age
- Race
- Religion
- Prior court involvement
- · Address and living environment
- · Economic circumstances

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