Supporting Positive Outcomes for Youth Involved with Law

This presentation is a review of current literature that helps us understand how to better support positive outcomes for youth involved with the law. We explore the impact of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), the legal statute that governs youth justice programs and systems in Canada. The YCJA’s emphasis on using extrajudicial measures to divert first time or less serious and non-violent offenders away from the criminal justice system has successfully shifted the focus of the youth justice system from being more punitive to being more rehabilitative. Nonetheless, the YCJA is only regarded as a “qualified success” because the incarceration rate of Indigenous youth has not decreased, and there have been unintended adverse impacts on youth from racialized groups. This presentation explores the outcomes of this legislation, reviews “what works” from the literature, and provides recommendations and evidence-based guidelines and principles for practitioners and program developers to support positive outcomes for youth involved in the law.

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