

SHAPING THE FUTURE

2019 ATSA Conference | Thursday November 7 | 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

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Multidisciplinary Group Interventions for Adolescents in Residential Treatment

Symposium Chair: Kelli R. Thompson, PhD
Auburn University

The Accountability Based Sex Offense Prevention (ABSOP) Program is funded by a 20-year multimillion-dollar public-public partnership between the Alabama Department of Youth Services and Auburn University. The ABSOP Program is a 72-bed residential treatment program for adolescents adjudicated for illegal sexual behavior housed within a high-security juvenile correctional facility. Valuable resources, likely to have been seen as unattainable by the staff on hand at the correctional facility, have been made available to the youth in DYS custody through multidisciplinary partnerships within Auburn University colleges and departments. This symposium will cover three successful multidisciplinary partnerships that are *shaping the future* with innovative and effective group treatment services for adjudicated youth in the state.

The first presentation covers results from a multi-year partnership with the AU Department of Human Development and Family Studies to provide a multi-family group intervention to youth and their family members at the facility. The second presentation covers results from a partnership with the Applied Behavioral Analysis Program to study group procedures for decreasing problem behavior in detained residential settings. The final presentation will present preliminary data from a partnership with the Department of Agriculture to bring a group gardening intervention to the facility.

Multi-Family Group Interventions in Residential Treatment

Ben Hinnant, PhD
Raven Pyle, MS
Jessica Norton, MS
Auburn University

Family involvement has been identified as a critical aspect of best practices when treating adolescents who have engaged in sexually abusive behavior. However, many practitioners working in secured residential settings find it difficult to effectively manage family interventions. The Department of Human Development and Family Studies provides group family therapy on alternating visitation days to increase participation.

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This presentation will address the effectiveness of the Family Focus Program, a multi-family group intervention (MFGI) for youth adjudicated for illegal sexual behavior using a within-subjects design (pre-test, post-test, and any preliminary data from two additional longitudinal data collections after release). Dependent variables will include adolescent affect regulation and the internalizing and externalizing symptoms for both parent and adolescent. Discussion will address future aims to explicate the mechanisms of the intervention and evaluate differences between matched control and treatment groups.

Learning Goals:

- Overview of the multi-family group intervention with adolescents who have engaged in sexually abusive behavior and discussion of the potential challenges presented by facilitating family interventions in residential settings.
- Learn about the potential benefits of multi-family group interventions for participants
- Ask questions of professionals who have been providing these services for many years.

Group Procedures for Decreasing Problem Behaviors Displayed by Detained Adolescents

John Rapp, PhD
Auburn University

The Applied Behavioral Analysis Program at Auburn University has been providing ABA services to adolescents flagged as having a specific behavioral problem or intellectual deficit, to address youth with special needs in residence at the correctional facility. This includes assessing for functional and social skills deficits associated with specific diagnosis of ASD problems or with a specific identified behavioral problem such as enuresis or encopresis. The ABA team has developed a list of specific treatment plans for the problems and standard protocols and procedures for individual and group interventions for adolescents in detention.

In a series of applied studies, Rapp and colleagues used group procedures to decrease problem behavior and increase compliant behavior for adolescents in juvenile justice setting. In Study 1, fixed-time delivery of attention by dormitory staff decreased problem behavior displayed by a group of five to 11 detained adolescents during free periods. In Study 2, rules from a therapist plus contingencies for following those rules increased appropriate line walking during specific transition periods within the facility. Subsequently, rules alone maintained appropriate line walking, however, direct training

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was required to produce appropriate line walking during other transitions. For Study 3, therapists found that rules, visual feedback (i.e., marks on a board denoting rule violations), and post-session feedback decreased problem behaviors in three classrooms within a residential detention facility. In addition, results from social validity measures in each study indicated that the procedures and outcomes were acceptable to the respective staff members and classroom teachers.

Learning Goals:

- Overview of group applied behavioral analysis (ABA) interventions with adolescent with adolescents in residential and/or detention settings.
- Learn about effective group procedures for reducing problem behaviors and quiet compliance which may be unique to detained populations
- Ask questions of professionals who have been providing these services for many years.

Group Gardening Interventions Across Multiple Units in a Juvenile Correctional Facility

Jonathan Lillebo, BA
Mt. Meigs Correctional Facility

The group gardening intervention serves to give youth detained at the correctional facility access to positive activity and healthy interaction with peers and adults. The gardening group is available to all youth in residence at the facility, those adjudicated for illegal sexual behavior and those adjudicated for other serious non-sexual offenses. The overall goal is to create an extended treatment milieu across the entire campus, making treatment more accessible and bridges gaps in a positive and uplifting setting. The gardening group strives to be a vital part of the CARE team at the correctional facility. Positive activity and positive relationships help in holding students accountable and encouraged while giving outlet for energies that might otherwise be used negatively. Preliminary results from a post-intervention qualitative survey of students participating in the group intervention will be presented. Lessons learned from implementing these services in a correctional facility will be discussed.

Learning Goals:

- Overview of group gardening interventions in juvenile correctional settings.
- Learn about the expected treatment gains from implementing these services.
- Ask questions of professionals who have been providing these services for many years.

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Kelli R. Thompson is an Assistant Research Professor and Director of the Juvenile Delinquency Lab in the Department of Psychology at Auburn University. Her current research interests include the developmental pathways of delinquent behavior and the assessment, treatment-related outcomes and public policy issues facing justice-involved youth.

Ben Hinnant is an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University. His research interests are in child and adolescent development, familial and peer socializing influences, and biological stress response systems.

Raven Pyle is a doctoral student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University. Her research focuses on trauma, child abuse/neglect, clinical treatment of traumatic experiences in childhood, and the transmission of risk and protective factors within family systems.

Dr. Rapp is the Director of the Applied Behavior Analysis program and a full Professor in the Department of Psychology at Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama. He is also the Project Director for the Alabama Psychiatric Medication Review Team with the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

Jonathan Lillebo is the Head Gardener for the ABSOP Gardening Program at the Mt Meigs correctional facility. He is an Air Force veteran who completed his Bachelor's degree in Horticulture at Auburn University. He has a background in managing student-run gardens.