

Working with Justice-Involved Youth

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Plan for today

The juvenile justice system



Correlates of JJ involvement



Working with JJ youth



The juvenile justice system

- 2.1 million youth <18 arrested in the US each year
 - 57% placed on probation
 - ~87,000 incarcerated



The juvenile justice system

- Many are processed through youth court
 - Special court docket for youth under 18 not being charged as an adult
- Adolescents in youth court can be sentenced to:
 - Community service
 - Probation
 - Restitution
 - Detention
- Some will be JCAs



Justice-involved youth

- JJ youth are nearly 3/4 male, > 50% POC, 20% LGBTQ
- Many have low school achievement, truancy
- Most are 13-16 years old
- Most common crimes are person or property

(OJJDP; 2023)

Justice-involved youth

- Recidivism for youth under the age of 21 is common
- Most youth decrease or stop illegal activity during the first three years following their encounter with the JJ system
- More likely to reoffend if:
 - Substance misuse
 - Low-quality/not enough services received
 - Poor academic achievement

(OJJDP; 2020)

Effects of JJ involvement

- Difficulties obtaining and maintaining employment (Piquero, Farrington, Nagin, & Moffitt, 2010; Tanner, Davies, & O'Grady, 1999)
- Health risk behaviors, poorer health (Mason et al., 2010; Odgers et al., 2007; Piquero et al., 2010)
- Adult criminality (Loeber & Farrington, 2012; Mason et al., 2010)

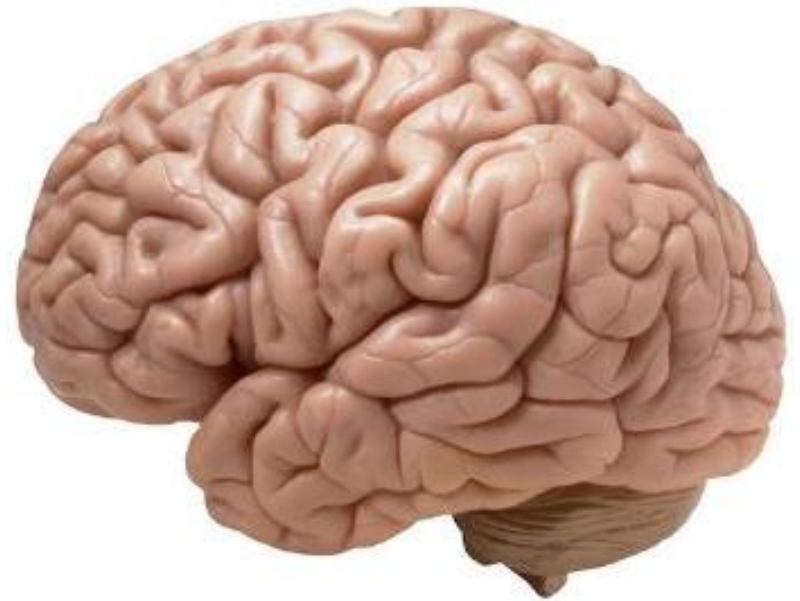
Why do youth
become JJ-involved?

Biology



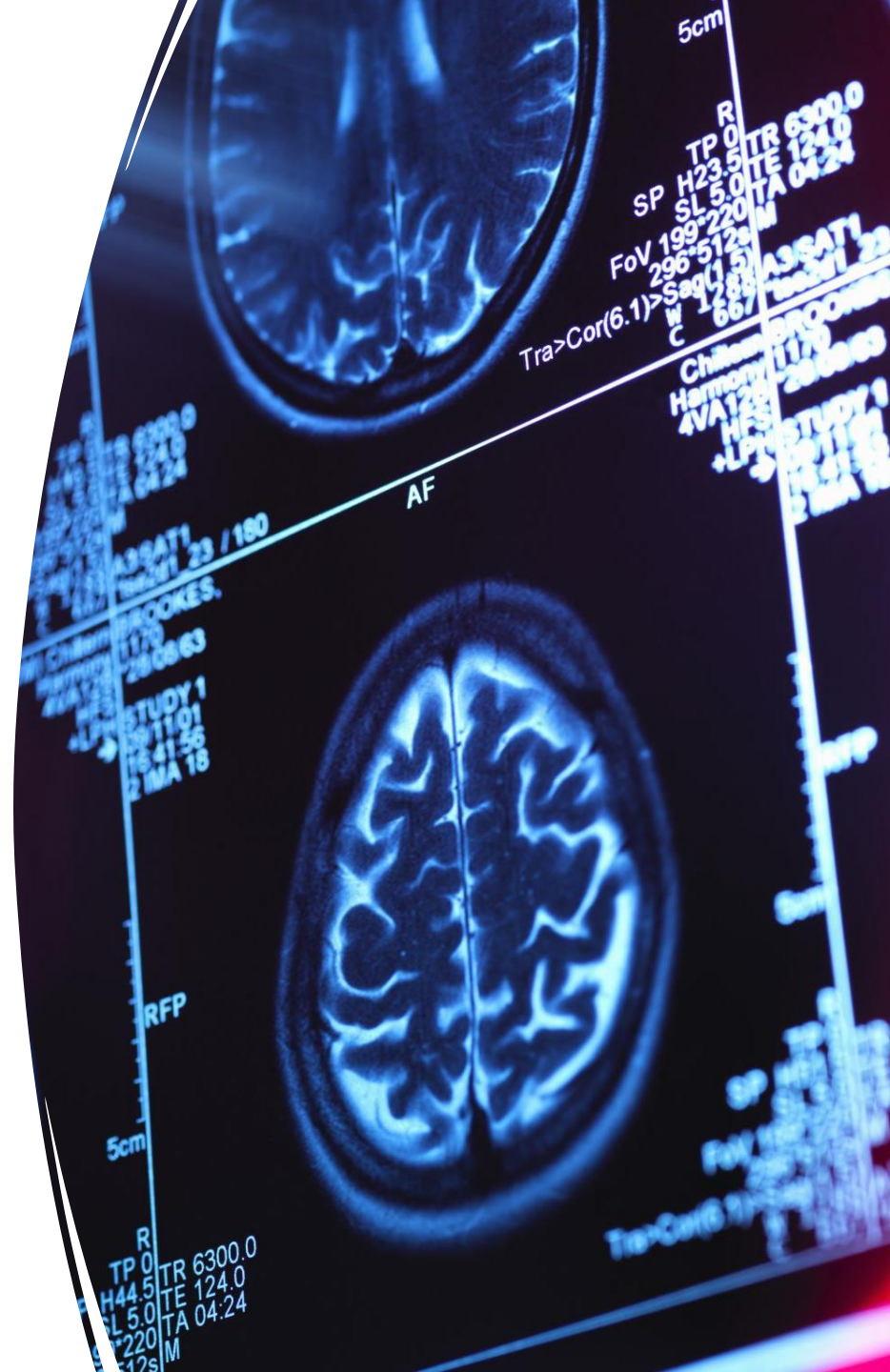
Adolescent brain development

- Typical development can help explain some adolescent behaviors that can lead to justice system involvement



Important brain processes

- Before adolescence:
 - Limbic system is mostly developed
- After adolescence:
 - Prefrontal cortex matures



Impulsivity

DENNIS THE MENACE

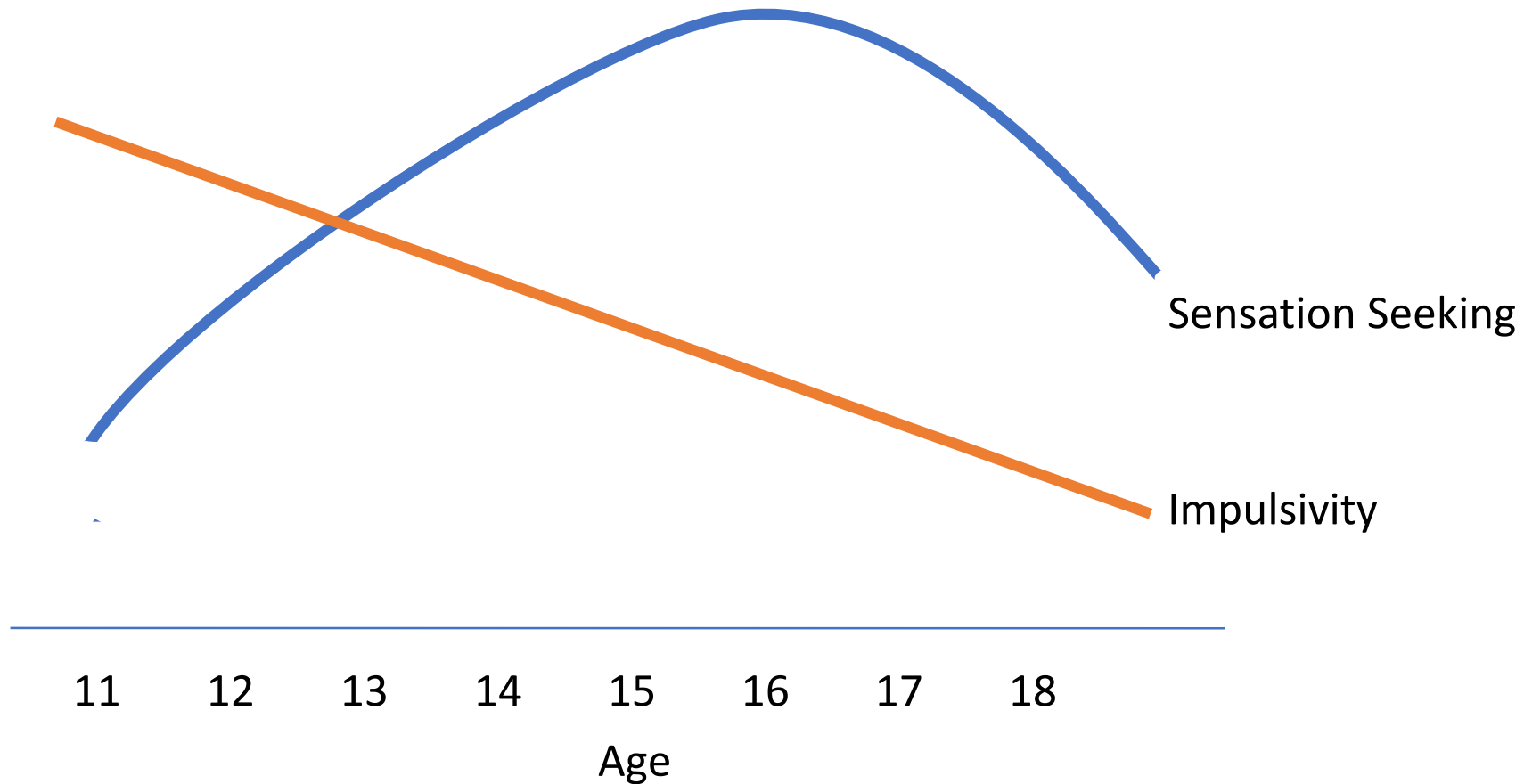


"BY THE TIME I THINK ABOUT WHAT I'M GONNA DO... I ALREADY DID IT!"

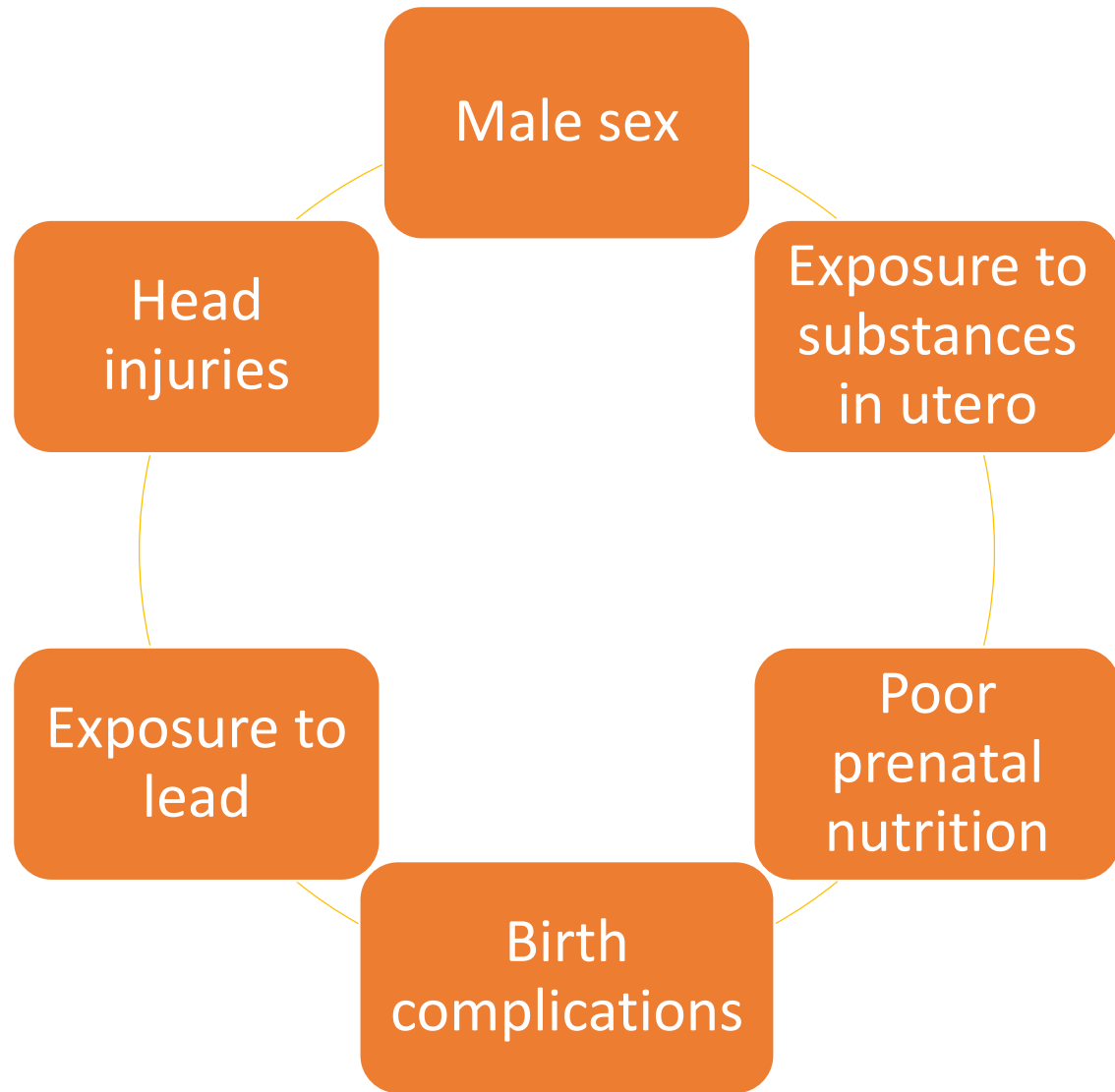
Sensation seeking



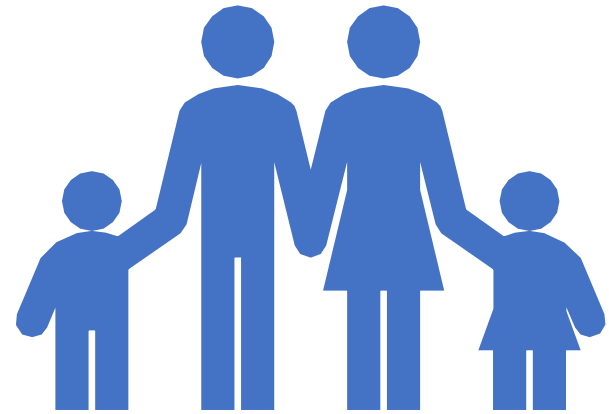
Important brain processes



Biological risks for delinquency



Families



Parenting & delinquency

- Meta-analysis of 161 studies of parenting and delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009)
- Strongest effects:
 - Neglect, hostility, rejection positively associated with delinquency
 - Monitoring and supervision negatively associated with delinquency

Bidirectional relationship

Child displays
difficult behaviors

Parents' disciplinary
strategies are reactive

Harsher punishments,
less involvement

Poorer child behavior



Solutions

- Parent training programs are effective for:
 - ADHD
 - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
 - Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder
 - Conduct Disorder
 - Delinquency prevention

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

- Younger kiddos
- Therapist works with the parent and child together
- Recommended when the parent-child relationship poor

Parent Management Training (PMT)

- For parents of kids up to age 12
- Parents role-play with a therapist and practice at home
- Recommended when the parent-child relationship good

The Incredible Years

- Group PMT

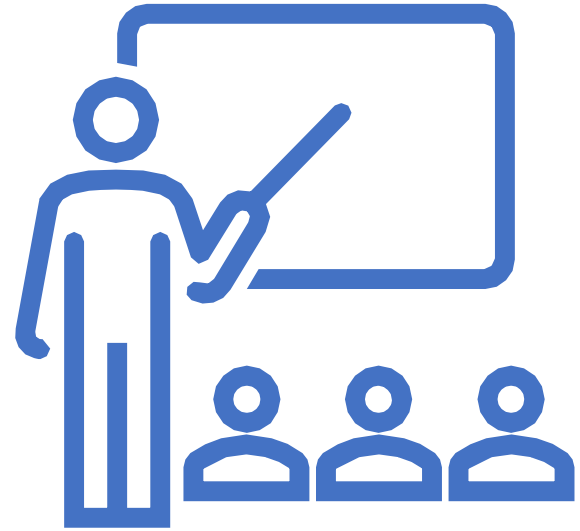
Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)

- Any age group
- Some sessions are just for the parent and some involve the child

Defiant Teens

- Communication skills for parents of adolescents
- Parent starts therapy, child joins sessions later

Schools



School engagement

Disengagement from school can start as early as first grade

A central developmental process underlying school failure and dropout

May moderate the impact of stressors on delinquency (DiPerro et al., 2016)

Direction of effects

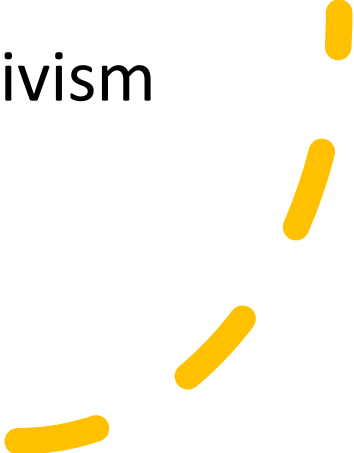
Engagement predicts delinquency

- Students who perform poorly in school, feel alienated from school are more likely to be delinquent

Delinquency predicts engagement

- Peer rejection, exclusionary discipline, negative feedback reduce enthusiasm for school

The school- to-prison pipeline

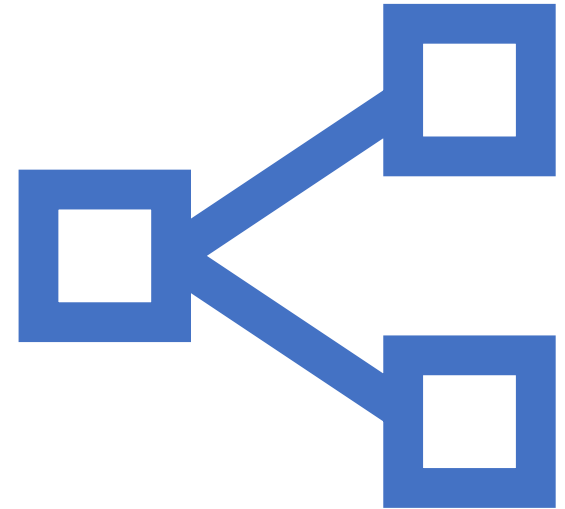
- Youth funneled out of public schools and into JJS
 - Many of these youth are minoritized and/or disadvantaged
 - Diminishes academic success, engagement
 - Associated with recidivism
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Solutions

- Schools:
 - Analysis of school discipline & addressing disparities
 - School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- Youth:
 - Post-incarceration school engagement and achievement negatively associated with recidivism (Blomberg et al., 2011)



Social
environment



Peer Relations

- Adolescents spend more time with peers than parents
- Some adolescents seek deviant peers
- Adolescents are influenced by peer delinquency



(Gallupe et al., 2019)

Gangs

National estimates- over 400,000 adolescents join gangs every year

Age of affiliation: 15

Prevalence varies by location

- Large cities - 32.6%
- Small cities - 48.0%
- Suburban counties - 36.7%
- Rural counties - 58.9%

(National Gang Center; 2023)

Neighborhoods

Neighborhood disorder and crime can reduce feelings of safety

Neighborhoods where crime and delinquency is taking place can model negative behavior

Community violence exposure increases risk for delinquency

Solutions

Individual

- Engagement in prosocial activities
- Mentoring
- Parental monitoring/supervision

Community

- Reduce community violence
- Restore a sense of community
- Places for prosocial activities

MH problems & treatment




Prevalence

Around 2/3 of youth in the JJS have an emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorder

As much as 10x as many youth in JJS (vs. community) have Intellectual Disability

Increasing awareness of this issue in last 20 years

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- A study of nearly 10,000 youth in the JJS found:
 - 34% had an SUD
 - 27% had a DBD
 - 31% had > 1 disorder
 - 14% had attempted suicide
 - Girls had higher rates of every MH issue except SUD

Prevalence

(Wasserman et al., 2010)

Exposure to trauma

- More prevalent among justice-involved youth
- Types
 - ACEs
 - Community violence
 - Family violence
 - Abuse
- Both muted reactions and PTS symptoms are associated with risk for delinquency

MH interventions

Common:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy

Sometimes:

- Family therapy

Youth-focused interventions in JJ


- CBT (Feucht & Holt, 2016)
 - Many “promising” or “effective”
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy-A (Rathus & Miller, 2015)
- Anger management
 - Coping Power Program (Lochman & Wells, 2002)
 - Juvenile Justice Anger Management (Goldstein et al., 2013)
- Substance Use
 - Cannabis Youth Treatment (Dennis et al., 2004)
- Trauma
 - TF-CBT (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2006)
- Problematic sexual behavior
 - No clearly effective tx, MST promising

Family interventions

- Family involvement generally leads to better outcomes (Chassin et al., 2009)
- Multisystemic Therapy (MST; Henggeler et al., 2009)
 - Family- and community-based intervention originally developed for JJ youth
- Functional Family Therapy (FFT; Alexander & Sexton, 2004)
 - Family-based intervention for behavior problems in at-risk and JJ youth



Barriers to Treatment

- Identification of need
 - Cost
 - Availability of providers
 - Cultural competence
 - Attitudes/knowledge of systems
 - Mandated tx & motivation
 - Family participation
- 



- Macro:
 - More funding for MH care in the JJ system
 - Training for practitioners
 - Educating courts, corrections
- Micro:
 - User-friendly manuals/research
 - Public scholarship/community engagement
 - Self-education about EBTs, cultural factors
- With clients:
 - Engagement strategies
 - Incentivizing family participation
 - MST-lite

Solutions



Things to remember

- JJ youth are still kids
- Empathy
- Many cases will break your heart
- Skills deficits are treatable

Questions?



Thank you!

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