

Arrests Among Youth after Out-of-Home **Mental** Health Treatment: Comparisons Across Community and Residential Treatment Settings

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Abstract:

Background: Youth with **mental** health needs that require out-of-home treatment receive services in three settings in Florida: community-based group homes and foster family settings, and inpatient group facilities. Research suggests that youth in group settings have poorer criminal justice outcomes. Such differences are attributed to the negative peer effects in group environments.

Aims: To compare arrest rates during and after out-of-home treatment for youth across the three settings. In addition, to determine whether the higher arrest rate after youth received therapeutic group home services was due to the group setting or the higher rate of arrests during treatment.

Methods: Florida Medicaid claims data were analyzed to identify youth who received out-of-home care from 2003-2007. Propensity score matching accounted for observed differences between youth in different treatment settings.

Results: Arrest rates for youth in therapeutic group home care were higher during and after treatment. Arrests during the treatment episode accounted for a substantial portion of the difference in arrests after out-of-home treatment. The group versus non-group nature of the treatment setting was not a strong determinant of arrest after the treatment episode.

Conclusions and implications for practice: Youth with histories of delinquency may be better served in therapeutic foster care settings than group home settings. Therapeutic foster care settings reduce the negative peer effects associated with group treatment. Outcomes for non-delinquent youth receiving group home services may also improve is the absence of negative peer effects.

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