

Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections Youth Treatment Programming Evaluation

Department has not assessed fidelity for some treatment intervention components, implemented some treatment programming recommended improvements, and tracked a comprehensive set of outcome measures for its treatment programming, potentially impacting its ability to ensure its treatment programming's effectiveness

Audit purpose

To determine whether the Department's processes for evaluating the treatment programming it provides to youth committed to its care are consistent with recommended practices, including processes for assessing if its evidence-based treatment interventions are implemented as designed and evaluating whether its youth treatment programming follows practices associated with reduced recidivism and is achieving its intended rehabilitative outcomes.

Key findings

The Department:

- Is statutorily responsible for rehabilitating delinquent youth committed to its care, which involves addressing youths' risk of reoffending with the goal of reducing crime and protecting public safety.
- Has established a process to monitor if its group treatment interventions for youth are delivered as designed, also known as fidelity. However, it has not assessed some treatment intervention components necessary to ensure fidelity, such as frequency, duration, and required order of content of group treatment interventions, increasing the risk of providing less-effective treatment interventions.
- Has evaluated whether its youth treatment programming adheres to certain practices associated with reduced recidivism using the Evidence-Based Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) but has not ensured some CPC evaluation report recommendations from its 3 most recently completed evaluations were implemented, potentially impacting its treatment programming's effectiveness in reducing youth recidivism. However, it revised its CPC evaluation policy during the audit to address some issues.
- Has not tracked outcome measures related to its treatment programming's goals in the aggregate, i.e. for the entire youth population receiving treatment programming, or conducted outcome evaluations, and may not have some information to assess and improve the effectiveness of its treatment programming in rehabilitating youth in its care.

Key recommendations

The Department should:

- Ensure it delivers treatment interventions with fidelity and develop and/or revise and implement policies and procedures for monitoring treatment intervention fidelity and correcting identified deficiencies.
- Implement its revised CPC evaluation policy and further revise and implement the policy to include requirements for addressing recommendations that Department staff have determined to be nonactionable.
- Develop and implement a plan for identifying additional outcome measures and conducting outcome evaluations related to its treatment programming, and establish outcome measures and conduct outcome evaluations, as appropriate.