



Marin County Youth Court



Restorative and Trauma Informed Practices



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Agenda

- 1 Understanding the Teenage Demographic**
 - Types of Youth
 - The Teenage Brain
- 2 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
 - Implications on Developing Brains
- 3 Using Trauma Informed Care (TIC)**
- 4 Reflecting this Knowledge in Youth Court Practices**
 - Our Hearing Process
 - How We Developed Our Court

Introduction The Problem ACES TIC Our Solution

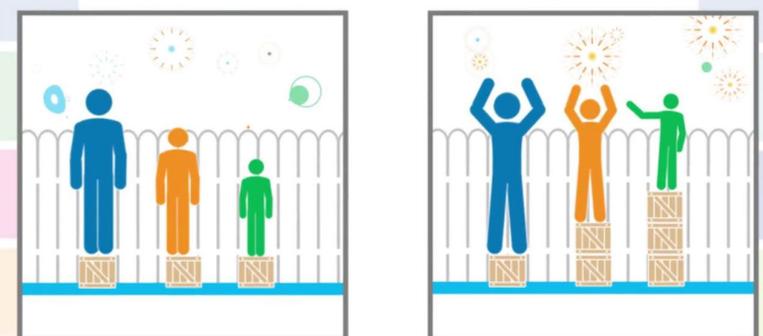
Impacted Youth Need More Supports



The illustration shows a large tree with orange and yellow leaves and some red fruit. Three stylized human figures (two red, one orange) stand on boxes of varying heights, reaching up towards the tree. A fourth figure (red) is on the ground, placing a box to create a step for the others.

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Equality Does Not Produce Equity



The image is split into two panels. The left panel, labeled 'EQUALITY' in green, shows three people of different heights (tall blue, medium orange, short green) standing on a blue surface behind a white fence. Each has a wooden box in front of them, but the shortest person cannot see over the fence. The right panel, labeled 'EQUITY' in orange, shows the same three people. The tallest person has no box, the middle person has one, and the shortest person has two. Now all three can see over the fence and are celebrating with fireworks.

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Some Youth Need More Supports

We work with two kinds of youth:



1. Youth who have experienced significant trauma
2. Youth who have not experienced significant trauma

The problem is...



Youth who have experienced toxic trauma are often labeled defiant and/or delinquent



The traditional adversarial Youth Court process did not adequately serve traumatized youth



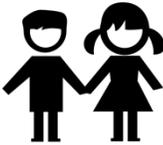
So we infused restorative and trauma informed principles into our Youth Court procedures

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Achieving Equity in School Success



Strategies for Working with the Teen Brain



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

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Understanding the Teen Brain

Teens often engage in spontaneous actions driven by the amygdala



The amygdala drives emotions, impulses, aggression, and instinctive behavior

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Understanding the Teen Brain



AMYGDALA HIJACK

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Understanding the Teen Brain

The brain is not fully developed until 25 years of age!

- Undeveloped pre-frontal cortex → Poor impulse control
- Excessive reservoir of dopamine → Easily triggered
- Difficulty identifying motive for a poor choice → The “Duh, I Don’t Know” Phenomenon
- Amygdala Spontaneous Action → Results in poor choice

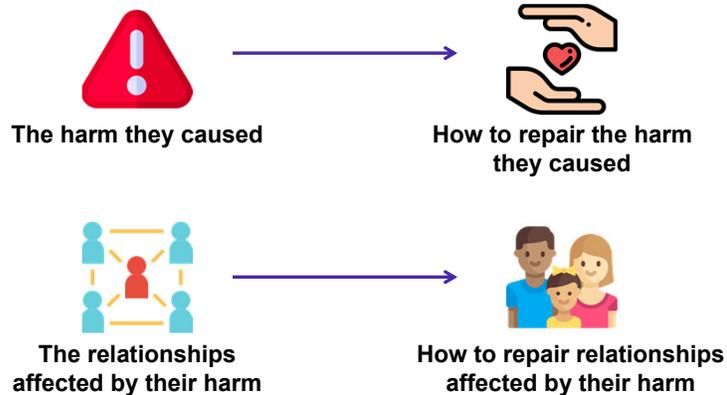
Key Takeaway:

When teenagers make poor choices and have difficulty explaining why, it’s because their brains aren’t fully developed.

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Restorative Practices and The Teen Brain

Teens can (with a little help) identify:



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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

ACES Primer (4:59)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccKFkcfXx-c>

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ACEs Impact on Developing Brain

ACEs exaggerate all the developing teenage brain issues, and ACEs trauma drives aberrant behaviors in response to:



Everyday problem solving



School expectations



General Life Challenges

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ACEs and School Performance

ACEs students:

 are 2.5x more likely to fail a grade	 are suspended or expelled more often	 Score lower on achievement tests
 are unable to effectively use language to relate to others	 are designated as special ed. students more frequently	

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Trauma Informed Care (TIC)

Guiding Principles:

 Safety	 Trustworthiness and transparency	 Peer support and mutual self-help
 Collaboration and mutuality	 Empowerment, voice, and choice	 Reconising cultural, historical, and gender issues

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What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) is a holistic, person-centered approach to treatment that understands and incorporates the biological, psychological, neurological, and social impact of trauma on an individual.

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Trauma Informed Care (TIC)

Trauma-specific intervention programs generally recognize the following:

- The survivor need to be respected, informed, connected, and hopeful regarding their own recovery.
- The interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma such as substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety.
- The need to work collaboratively with survivors, family and friends of the survivor, and other human services agencies in a manner that will empower survivors.

❖ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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Guiding Trauma Informed Question

When a child engages in aberrant behavior, we generally ask,

We should ask (while still setting a boundary for the behavior),

“Why did you _____?” → **“What happened to you?”**

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Paper Tigers Trailer

Paper Tigers Trailer (2:11)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdDr_nZOIXc

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Understanding the teen brain and ACEs shaped our Youth Court practices.

Before the Hearing

- Intake process: Highly descriptive emphasizing restorative practices and youth agency
- Parent and child encouraged to observe a proceeding before the child's hearing
- ACES & trauma training for Youth Court Advocates and Jurors
- Pre-hearing restorative conference with both Advocates
 - Parameters of the Restorative Plan are co-created with the respondent

Key Takeaway:

We ensure the respondents and their families are integrated into our community and feel safe to express their thoughts.

During the Hearing

- A non-adversarial, collaborative, restorative and trauma informed problem solving hearing process
- Parent is not permitted in court during their child's hearing
- Our jurors don't judge; they interview, connect with, and support the respondent
- Jurors identify respondents strengths and reflect them back

Key Takeaway:

Restorative Justice is a youth-led, peer based process that holds the respondent accountable & brings them back into the community.

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Peer Jurors Ask Questions About:

- The issue that got them referred to the Youth Court
- Who was harmed, what relationships were impacted?
- How will they repair the harm done & relationships impacted?
- Their friend group makeup and behaviors
- Their relationship with adults at school
- How they feel about their grades
- School extracurricular activities
- Out of school interests
- Family life: Whom do they live with? How are they treated?
- Do they have adults they trust, talk to, and rely on?
- Self-perceived strengths

Key Takeaway:

Questions focus on learning about the respondent and how to help them, not focusing judgement or blame.

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Restorative Plan Co-creation

- The Restorative Plan addresses the harm done and the relationships impacted and matches the needs of the whole child with resources in the community
- The jury may go outside of the parameters of the Restorative Plan, only if they get the agreement of the Respondent and the Advocates
- Jury foreperson explains the reasoning behind the Restorative Plan to the Respondent before the Bailiff publishes the decision

Key Takeaway:

The Restorative Plan is a collaborative process, decided on by the both the respondent and their peers.

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After the Hearing

- Assist base community service assignments that reflects the Respondent's personal strengths
- 12 Hour Alcohol and Drug Safety Skills Training
- Ongoing case management and hearing debriefing
- Incorporating Respondents into the Youth Court community and encouraging them to take leadership roles

Key Takeaway:

The respondent is checked in with regularly and invited to become a part of our Youth Court community.

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How We Got Here

- Keeping and paying attention to our data
- Empowering respondents and youth volunteers to share ideas and suggest changes in the program
- Keeping up with pertinent research and literature
- Consistent program re-evaluation and improvement
- Approach the work as a Participatory Action Research Project

Key Takeaway:

Our Youth Court process is the result of research and collaboration, and is always changing and improving!

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THANK YOU!

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