

# Best of the NETWORKER

## Feature Articles from Past Issues

The Northwest Youth Networker; newsletter of the [Northwest Network for Youth](#), edited by [Jerry Fest](#) of the [InterNetwork for Youth](#)

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*Note: some links from older issues may be expired*

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### Introducing: Second Round Boxing Program



*Editor's note: I love sharing examples of PYD programs in action. [Second Round](#), a program of [Haven House](#) in Raleigh, NC, is one of the best I've had the pleasure of visiting. I asked staff [Matt Schnars](#) if he could send me a photo and write up to share with our Networker's -- and I'm pleased to share what I received.*

Second Round is a Positive Youth Development Program (PYD) which promotes resiliency protective factors in youth while attempting to reduce exposure to risk factors. The program uses boxing, weight training, and other forms of exercise to teach youth

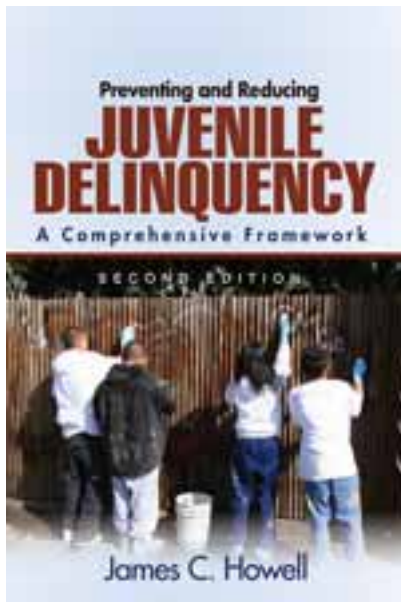
teamwork, self-discipline, time management, leadership, healthy living, and other pro-socialization elements.

The program occurs during after-school hours at Second round Youth Center (youth drop-in center). Our facility has a full line of boxing and weight training equipment including a competition size boxing ring, professional rubberized flooring, commercial weight training equipment, and all the required accessories. Youth are required to attend orientation and agree to behavior guidelines prior to entering the program. The program targets gang involved youth between 10-21 years old (male and female).

Program sessions are very structured and challenging for youth participants. Sessions are held Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5:30pm-7:00pm. Typical sessions entail warm up and stretching, calisthenics, running, sprints, jump rope sessions, structured weight training, and boxing skills training. Youth are required to engage in education and/or employment to remain in the program. Program staff provides strong and supportive mentoring relationships with youth participants and "coach" them toward personal and program goal achievement.

The program integrates behavior modification and life skills into all program sessions. Youth who attain high status in the program are afforded opportunities to travel to and compete in boxing competition including Golden Gloves and the Olympic Trials. Youth are also given opportunities to travel with staff to conferences or other community events that promote their growth and leadership. Our gym is sanctioned by USA boxing and some of our participants, who have achieved program objectives, are registered to compete in amateur boxing. The program attempts to encourage youth away from gangs and toward healthy attachments to their school, community, and families.

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## Expanded Book Review: Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency second edition, by James C. Howell.

By Gary Hammons

NOTE: With so many cutbacks in funding and services few have time or energy to pursue in-depth study of issues and concerns for challenged young people. To help offset this, I have committed to provide an expanded review of the professional Juvenile Justice text noted above. Each week, a summary of a section of the book will be linked to the Northwest Networker. This way, I hope to convey the content and flavor of a well researched and documented work by an author who has been in the juvenile justice field for decades.

Of course, I recommend that readers go to the source if they have the time. Also, I would welcome calls and email questions regarding this effort and the content of the book. My phone number is 206-628-3760 and email is [gary@nwny.org](mailto:gary@nwny.org).

### Part I, Historical Context:

The juvenile justice field has many myths. Even among professionals, there is often little concern for actual information. Among the most notable myths are: A new breed of offenders called “Super-predators” is now among us; A juvenile violence epidemic occurred the late 1980s and early 1990s; juveniles frequently carry guns and traffic in them; juvenile violence is the top crime problem in the US; School shootings represent and second wave of juvenile violence; juvenile offenders are committing more and more violent crimes at younger ages; the juvenile justice system is failing and cannot handle today’s more serious offenders

In examining the research data, there is no substance to any of the above. However, through faulty logic and media sensationalism, there is much more emphasis on punishment than rehabilitation. Many or most states have made it easier to transfer juveniles to the adult criminal system as a deterrent. Unfortunately, these practices have intensified in spite of numerous studies showing that juvenile violence is in decline and that schools are the safest institutions in our communities.

Another consequence of the above is the development of a moral panic regarding juvenile justice. Moreover, this has spilled over into the schools and many have adopted a “Zero Tolerance” posture regarding many behaviors. That is, punishment such as suspension or expulsion is mandated, regardless of the circumstances or impact on students and their families. Of course, this ZT practice is intensified by media coverage of highly isolated events. Worse, some ZT policies in schools punish students of acts or actions unrelated to school. The most heartless may be expelling a student for attempting suicide (even when it is not in the school setting).

Schools have increasingly deployed law enforcement personnel on site, and this has resulted in some tragic episodes. Combined with ZT, there has been devastating impact on students. As a consequence most secondary schools have a 30+% non-completion rate, and it is usually much higher for minorities.

The wide spread and increasing use of suspensions needs to be replaced by alternatives such as earlier intervention & analysis of emerging problems and behaviors, a greater range of options for challenging students and features such as case management for young people and their families rather than simple exclusion. The latter is a big contributor to more than 25% of adults not being productive members of society.

Trends in juvenile delinquency show that arrests have increased while the actual level of offending has remained constant. Crime reports and data summaries are often inconsistent and out of date, but current meta analysis of research indicates that there has been a prolonged decline in the level of juvenile offending. Also, the tyranny of small numbers principle has made it difficult to adequately assess some trends. With very few violent crimes typically committed by juveniles, a small increase can have an alarming result when reported as a

percentage. Combined with other practices in using data, and the media penchant for sensationalizing, the picture for juvenile offending is made to look far worse than it actually is.

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## **Tips On Dealing With Teen Runaways But are they *good* tips?**

By Jerry Fest

I actually wasn't going to write an article for this week's Networker, as we are presenting Part II of Gary Hammon's 3-part book review (below). But, while searching for links I came across "[Tips on Dealing with Teen Runaways](#)" in a Pennsylvania news website that I just had to comment on.

Parents dealing with runaway behavior need clear, helpful guidance. Unfortunately, they rarely get it ... and these tips are no exception. Take for example, tips number 1 & 2, which deal with finding counseling for the runaway youth. Tip number 1 is:

*-- Present counseling in a positive light, instead of as punishment.*

OK. I guess that's not so bad, except that it doesn't provide even a clue about how to do that. This tip, however, is immediately followed by Tip number 2:

*-- If a child won't agree to counseling, bring the child in kicking and screaming.*

Huh? Doesn't dragging a child to counseling against their will kind of dim that "positive light" a bit? And what good does it do to drag a child kicking and screaming to counseling, when involuntary counseling is rarely helpful (how many counselors does it take to change a light bulb? Only one, but the light bulb has to really *want* to change).

These two "tips" are followed by 5 more ideas, all of which are focused on the child. Here's the most important tip I can offer to any parent dealing with runaway behavior. Young people do not run *to*; they run *from*. Yes, look at your child's behavior, issues and needs, but when you're trying to define the problem, spend at least as much time looking in the mirror.

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## **Expanded Book Review: Part II Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency second edition, by James C. Howell.**

By Gary Hammons

Editor's Note: In Part II of this 3 part series, Gary Hammons continues his review of James C. Howell's professional Juvenile Justice text. Gary welcomes calls or emails regarding this review. His phone number is 206-628-3760 and his email is [gary@nwny.org](mailto:gary@nwny.org). The Northwest Youth Networker also [welcomes comments](#).

### **The Research Base on Juvenile Offenders and Gangs**

In analyzing factors that lead to or prevent delinquency, researchers have noted five elements, four of which are beyond the control of the affected youth. They are: individual, family, school, peer group, and community. Many problem behaviors have multiple causes and interactive effects of the above factors are only recently being explored.

One strategy for risk reduction has been the pursuit of developmental assets per “positive youth development.” Unfortunately, research is showing that it often takes far more than a simple majority of assets to offset the risks for some young people. That is, risk factors function in a cumulative fashion such that the greater the number of factors, the greater the likelihood of delinquent behavior.

Mental health dynamics have not been well researched regarding juvenile justice. Approximately 65 – 70% of young people in detention facilities suffer from mental health and/or substance abuse disorders (Note from Gary: Although this may often be the result of detention rather than the cause). While extensive investigation of the extent of mental illness/addiction has been conducted, little progress has been made with regard to treatment in detention facilities. The emphasis on punishment rather than rehabilitation, undoubtedly contributes much to the situation.

Much attention has been given to risk factors as predictive considerations for future delinquency rather than prevention. Extensive guidelines are available, but most fail to recognize that the progression toward delinquency is not linear. That is, young people are more susceptible to some risks at certain stages of development than others (peer pressure for example). Unfortunately, myths surrounding juvenile delinquency often color the assessment of risks factors and diminish their usefulness.

### Juvenile Offender Careers

There is much utility in distinguishing everyday juvenile delinquents from hard core violent and chronic offenders. Three longitudinal studies funded by OJJDP have provided considerable insight into factors that differentiate these populations. Using a “Developmental Criminology” construct, researchers have been able to use these studies to better understand how some young people evolve into serious/dangerous offenders while others do not, and some leave deviant behaviors behind.

Many theories of juvenile delinquency are rising from these studies and are expected to contribute much to policy, treatment and rehabilitation measures. Additionally, there is growing awareness of the temporal nature of risk factors in furthering delinquency and this will lead to improved interventions. Other considerations such as the impact of drug use and mental illness at various stages of development are being extracted from this research. Importantly, the cause/effect of school problems and the interactive effects of multiple problems may be much better understood and these studies proceed.

### Youth Gangs

While definitions and expectations vary regarding gangs, there is no doubt that considerable attention and consternation is directed to this sector. Among factors are increased arrests, increasingly violent behaviors and perceived threats to the community at large. While the threats are real, the actual risk may be intentionally magnified by gang members through promotion of myths about their violence, coordination and cohesion. Law enforcement may also promote these myths as a way to garner more resources and support for suppression activities.

Fortunately, the prevalence of gangs has been in decline since the mid 1990s. Also, there are differential impacts of gangs on communities. Some cities and even rural areas are highly impacted while others have implemented very effective intervention strategies. However, cities with a population greater than 100,000 seem to have the most chronic gang related challenges. Surprisingly, data on the impact of youth gangs is very limited. While there is little doubt that gang inclusion increases criminality among its members, the actual impact may be far less as noted above. A number of gang prevention and suppression measures have been evaluated via OJJDP criteria and one of the best preventions is well defined and well organized after school programming.

**Expanded Book Review: Part III**  
**Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency**  
**second edition, by James C. Howell.**

By Gary Hammons

Editor's Note: In the final installment of this 3 part series, Gary Hammons continues his review of James C. Howell's professional Juvenile Justice text. Gary welcomes calls or emails regarding this review. His phone number is 206-628-3760 and his email is [gary@nwny.org](mailto:gary@nwny.org). The Northwest Youth Networker also [welcomes comments](#).



**Programmatic and Policy Responses to Juvenile Delinquency**  
**Principles and Characteristics of Best Practice Programs**

Very little has been done to identify and disseminate effective programs and to match them with youthful offenders who will benefit most. The main reason for this has been the pre-occupation with punishment for the last forty years. Incarceration has been the prime strategy since the 1980s, while there have been huge increases in juvenile detention in spite of a 50% reduction in violent/serious crimes.

Five reasons are noted in favor of replacing punishment with rehabilitation:

- Lack of impact on recidivism by rehabilitation programs was mistakenly reported in the 1970s.
- Statistics show that punishment in isolation simply does not work.
- Rehabilitation, when rigorously provided, is effective in all aspects of juvenile justice.
- The public likes rehabilitation rather than punishment as noted in several surveys.
- Rehabilitation is the moral thing to do. It is increasingly supported by brain research, recidivism and long term evaluation.

In terms of evaluating program effectiveness using meta-analysis, a number of principles surfaced. These include: small but not negligible effects refuting claims that “nothing works”; a range of programs are equally effective by gender, race and level of aggressiveness; the setting makes a big difference, large detention centers simply do not work while smaller scale (group homes, etc) are much better; some programs can make recidivism worse, “scared straight,” boot camps, shock incarceration and others with strong intuitive appeal have no deterrent effect; the type of program and its components are very significant when individually applied; treatment choices really matter when applied to serious and violent offending; almost more important than the type of program is the implementation rigor while some are much more difficult to replicate than others; most everyday juvenile justice programs reduce recidivism by not by much; there is enough research to determine best practice but more is needed.

**Principles of Effective Correctional Intervention**

Assess actuarial risk and need. Enhance intrinsic motivation. Target interventions including: prioritizing supervision and treatment resources, address greatest criminogenic needs, match offender to services, assure appropriate levels of intervention “dosage”, cognitive-behavioral treatment should be used whenever possible, measure relevant processes, and provide measurement feedback. Implementing best practices programming can be fraught when challenges as noted earlier. Transportability of best practice interventions is often key to success. It is imperative that research rather than myths are the basis for prevention and rehabilitation programs.

Model programs include: Helping America's Youth Community Guide, Model Programs Guide (OJJDP), Blueprints for Violence Prevention, National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices (SAMSA), Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools, and What Works Clearinghouse (US Dept

of Ed). Systematic reviews of these programs are at University of Maryland, Community Guide to Community Prevention Services, Principles of Effective Correctional Intervention, The Campbell Crime and Justice Coordinating Group and The Center for Evaluation, Research and Methodology of the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies. Described in detail is the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory or CPAI. These resources go far to help policy deciders and reform advocates to contribute much to the field.

### The Comprehensive Strategy Framework

Developed by OJJDP the principles include strengthening the family, support core institutions (schools, churches, community organizations), focus on delinquency prevention, provide immediate and thorough interventions early on, identification and control of the small group of serious and violent offenders to assure community safety. Highly necessary for this strategy to work is information and client referral exchange across agencies, networking and interagency collaboration. With both prevention and timely intervention carefully coordinated and implemented, dramatic improvement can be realized for our juvenile justice system.

### What Does Not Work in Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency

Some programs have been extensively implemented with little or no evaluation of effectiveness. Among these are Wilderness Challenge Programs, Police in Schools, Street Gang Sweeps, Balanced and Restorative Justice and Motivational Interviewing. Research has shown the following to be ineffective and sometimes negative: D.A.R.E., Zero Tolerance Policies, Punishment Only, Scared Straight Programs, Boot Camps, Large Custodial Facilities, Long Terms of Confinement, Curfew Laws, Out of Home Placements, Disproportionate Minority Confinement, Generally Deterrent Policies, Punishment in Adult Prisons. The latter is almost a guarantee of a future criminal career. Nearly every state has implemented transfer in some form, although a turnaround is starting. Currently, this is one of the worst elements of the juvenile justice system at present.

### Conclusions:

While much is to be done, the existing framework for juvenile justice is workable. More emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation while eliminating punishment without treatment would both improve the prospects for at-risk youth and save considerable public expense. These policy and attitudinal changes are attainable and are supported by research and best practices.

### Conclusions by the Reviewer

I am sure there are many other worthy publications regarding juvenile delinquency. I am sure our readers would like to hear about them. Also, many practitioners would probably like to make the changes suggested by the author; but the political and economic climate, along with simple inertia, are powerful forces in maintaining the status quo. Perhaps the current economic crisis of many states will force them away from detention as the primary way to address troublesome behaviors among young people.

As the data shows, punishment is not much of a deterrent, so detention needs to be combined with treatment and aftercare. Moreover, recent research in adolescent brain development makes punishment/deterrence irrelevant in many situations. It is too bad that the media does not make more of this and promote reform & redirection of juvenile delinquency policy.

25% of young people are at risk of becoming non-contributing adults. Detention and punishment only are almost a guarantee of that many young people becoming non-contributing as adults. With a rapidly ageing population, this bodes ill for the future unless policies and practices are redirected. Additionally, prosecuting and detaining juveniles as adults is a virtual guarantee of career criminality. Better ways to deal with serious

and violent offenses among young people is a critical element in redirection of juvenile delinquency programming.

Schools, with their zero tolerance policies and efforts to exclude kids with challenging behaviors, intensify many juvenile delinquency problems, and much of this can be fixed with change in attitude as much as with additional resources. Schools need to become much more inclusive and provide much earlier diagnosis and interventions. More creative programming (such as much smaller schools) is needed to reduce gang problems and to safely educate students with potentially dangerous or serious criminal behaviors.

Improving our juvenile justice system will save huge amounts for the public and will contribute much to a better way of life for everyone. Legislatures, courts, schools, law enforcement, and especially the media, need to get on board to make the needed changes in policies and practices.



## A Word About Phobias

By Jerry Fest

I've been thinking about phobias lately ... well, to be honest, I've been thinking about one phobia specifically; ephebiphobia. First, let's define what a phobia is ...

The American Psychiatric Association defines "phobia" as an irrational and excessive fear of an object or situation, usually involving a feeling of endangerment or a fear of harm. Therefore, for something to be a phobia, there must be fear involved, and that fear must be *irrational* (fear of cracks in a sidewalk is irrational because they are unlikely to hurt you; fear of stepping in front of a speeding truck is rational) and *excessive* (cowering under your desk when you see a mouse may be excessive; doing the same thing when you see a gunman is not). When you understand this, you then understand that a phobia is not about the feelings or behaviors, it is about their relationship to the stimulus. It only becomes a phobia when your response is out of proportion to the stimulus.

So, back to ephebiphobia. In case you have never heard of this recognized phobia for which support groups and treatment exists ... ephebiphobia is the fear of teenagers. It describes the irrational and excessive response to teenagers and their behaviors demonstrated by both individual adults as well as group of adults, such as mass media and politicians. Those of us who work with young people can easily point to examples of ephebiphobia in action when we confront negative stereotypes or deal with what we perceive as irrational fears when we advocate for young people.

What is harder for us ... and often more harmful to youth ... is our ability to recognize ephebiphobia within our *own* field of youth work. Whenever we make decisions or put rules in place that are more about our own comfort level than they are about the needs of a youth, we are letting our ephebiphobia show. Whenever we fail to give power or decisions to young people because we fear what they may do with it, our ephebiphobia wins out. I'll remind you, I am not talking about *rational* and *proportional* cautions and responses ... I'm talking about things where we don't give young people a chance because we fear the worst in them instead of expecting the best of them. But to be honest, while I still see this in youth work and youth programs, it is more and more becoming the exception rather than the rule. What I still see, however, is ... for lack of a better term ... *negative ephebiphobia*. Don't bother searching for that term as I think I just made it up. What I'm referring to is not a responsive fear of teenagers, but a fear of teenager's *responses*; usually related to an unwillingness to implement consistency, expectations, and accountability out of a fear that youth will respond negatively and, where voluntary programs are concerned, withdraw their participation.

The facts are, however, that consistency, expectations, and accountability are exactly what young people need to become healthy and accomplished adults. Certainly there are issues beyond the scope of this article that speak to how consistency, expectations, and accountability are implemented in ways that are supportive, respectful and honor each individual's dignity ... but more often than not when I engage in discussions of being consistent, having expectations, and allowing youth to be accountable, I am met by responses indicating an inability to do that because of the fear that young people will react negatively and withdraw. My experience is that the exact opposite is true ... and that the real issue is that being consistent, having expectations, and holding youth accountable can be *uncomfortable for the worker*. This is *negative ephebiphobia* in action; the fear of a teenager's response. My advice? Focus less on the response, and more on the need. The question isn't whether a youth likes you or what you're doing; the question is whether you are good for them and whether they are getting what they need from you. If they are not experiencing consistency; if they are not receiving expectations to live up to; if they are not seeing their accountable for their lives and their behaviors ... the answer to that question is "no."

For more information on ephebiphobia, [CLICK HERE](#).