

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Turning young lives around

Associate Professor Brian Stout of the School of Social Sciences and Psychology has been awarded funding to examine the success of a community-based intervention program for young offenders. The research, which is supported and funded by Juvenile Justice NSW, will examine the effect of the Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) on a young person's wider world: other family members, especially younger siblings, caregivers, peers and schools. With researcher Dr Ingrid Schraner, an economist, Dr Stout will also conduct an economic analysis of the initiative.

"ISP team members work with some of the State's most marginalised and challenging families, experiencing multiple and often multigenerational disadvantage, living in difficult environments. Many families have not successfully engaged in other programs," says Dr Stout. "ISP therapists are afforded the clinical discretion to think creatively and 'do whatever it takes' to engage the family. NSW Juvenile Justice now seeks to determine the effectiveness of this approach."

The Intensive Supervision Program was designed for young people who commit serious and/or repeat offences, or whose severe anti-social behaviour increases their risk of offending. It has been piloted in two locations, Newcastle and Werrington, and is based on an American model, which in one trial reported a 63 per cent reduction in rearrests for violent/serious crimes in chronic juvenile offenders.

Dr Stout's research will include analysis of 30 young people, including indigenous young people, a range of age groups, at least one girl, and young people who live with younger siblings. In-depth interviews will be conducted with young people and their families, examining the offending record during and after the program; school attendance; factors such as employment, fatherhood, pregnancy and friendships; use of alcohol and drugs; behaviour of



siblings and other family members; and mental health. Clinicians and school principals and teachers will also be interviewed.

Juvenile Justice is responsible for the "safe and secure care" of young offenders who are sentenced or remanded to custody. In 2010, there were 434 young people in custody each day; almost half were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, many faced complex challenges and more than 85 per cent suffered a psychological disorder, most commonly substance abuse. This community-management initiative aims to address several factors simultaneously to change the culture in which a young person lives, with benefits for the juvenile, other family members and the wider community.

Project Title: Research into Intensive Supervision Program

Funding has been set at: \$100,000

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