

2018 CSAC Challenge Award – Executive Summary

Youth Detention Facility's (YDF's) Multi-Sensory De-Escalation Room (MSDR)

Overview: A multi-sensory de-escalation (MSDR) room is an innovative practice that creates a safe, trauma-informed environment allowing residents to de-escalate without use of force or an isolation room to prevent violence and increase safety in the Youth Detention Facility (YDF).

Challenge: Senate Bill (SB) 1143 limits room confinement to four hours in juvenile facilities and requires the use of less restrictive options prior to its use. Some facilities serving youth use a secured room to contain a youth's dysregulated behavior. The purpose of these types of rooms is to ensure the safety of staff, other youth and the dysregulated youth by securing him/her in a locked room until he/she has calmed down and no longer poses a threat. Unfortunately, in this scenario the youth becomes conditioned to rely on a person, room or an external control outside of themselves to suppress their maladaptive behavior. A reactive response to dysregulated behavior increases stress on both staff and youth, which can increase the risk of injury and nonproductive outcomes.

Innovative Solution: To better address the needs of our youth, the YDF transformed an empty dormitory in a housing unit and another space in the facility to create two MSDRs. Each MSDR provides a non-threatening space designed for supportive engagement and non-adversarial interaction between the residents and staff. The walls are painted with visually stimulating murals and stocked with a variety of manipulatives designed to engage all of the senses and stimulate gross motor, fine motor and cognitive skills. Through an assessment process, the MSDR is used proactively to develop self-regulation skills through sensory activities or it can be used responsively as an area for residents experiencing dysregulated behavior to safely regain control of their behavior and emotions. The MSDR is based on applied brain research, child

development and occupational therapy and has been utilized by occupational therapists in psychiatric facilities since 1975.

The MSDR encourages the dysregulated resident to interact with staff and the environment as a way of de-escalating their behavior. A resident's ability to use available resources in the environment to calm his/her emotions with staff engagement is a critical step in the process of learning self-regulation. Because of the soothing environment, pleasant look and feel of the room, the MSDR can be experienced positively by the residents as a resource, and not as a punitive sanction. One of the two MSDRs at the YDF is dedicated to special needs residents.

Originality: The YDF is the first juvenile detention facility in the United States to open a MSDR to be used as an alternative to isolation for detained youth.

Cost Effectiveness: The aromatherapy, manipulations, seating and floor pads for one room costs less than \$5,000. Other costs included the need for a camera system for monitoring and the addition of carpet in one room. Training for use of the room was funded by the Board of State and Community Corrections Juvenile Accountability Block Grant – Evidence-Based Practices Training Project grant. During the first 6 months in operation, use of force (UOF) incidents decreased by 51% compared to the previous year. This reduces potential injuries to both staff and residents, decreases workers compensation costs and reduces costs related to potential liability.

Results: The MSDR is proactive and has been utilized effectively by the YDF staff to conduct assessment, de-escalation and proactive activities. Since the implementation of the MSDR, UOF incidents have decreased by 42% and recommended use of room confinement instances have decreased by 37% compared to the previous year. The room also serves as an alternative to isolation and assists with compliance of SB 1143.

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