

# What Works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism with Youthful Offenders: Understanding the Principles of Effective Intervention

Presented by:

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# Evidence Based – What does it mean?

There are different forms of evidence:

- The lowest form is anecdotal evidence; stories, opinions, testimonials, case studies, etc - but it often makes us feel good
- The highest form is empirical evidence – research, data, results from controlled studies, etc. - but sometimes it doesn't make us feel good

# A Large Body of Research Has Indicated....

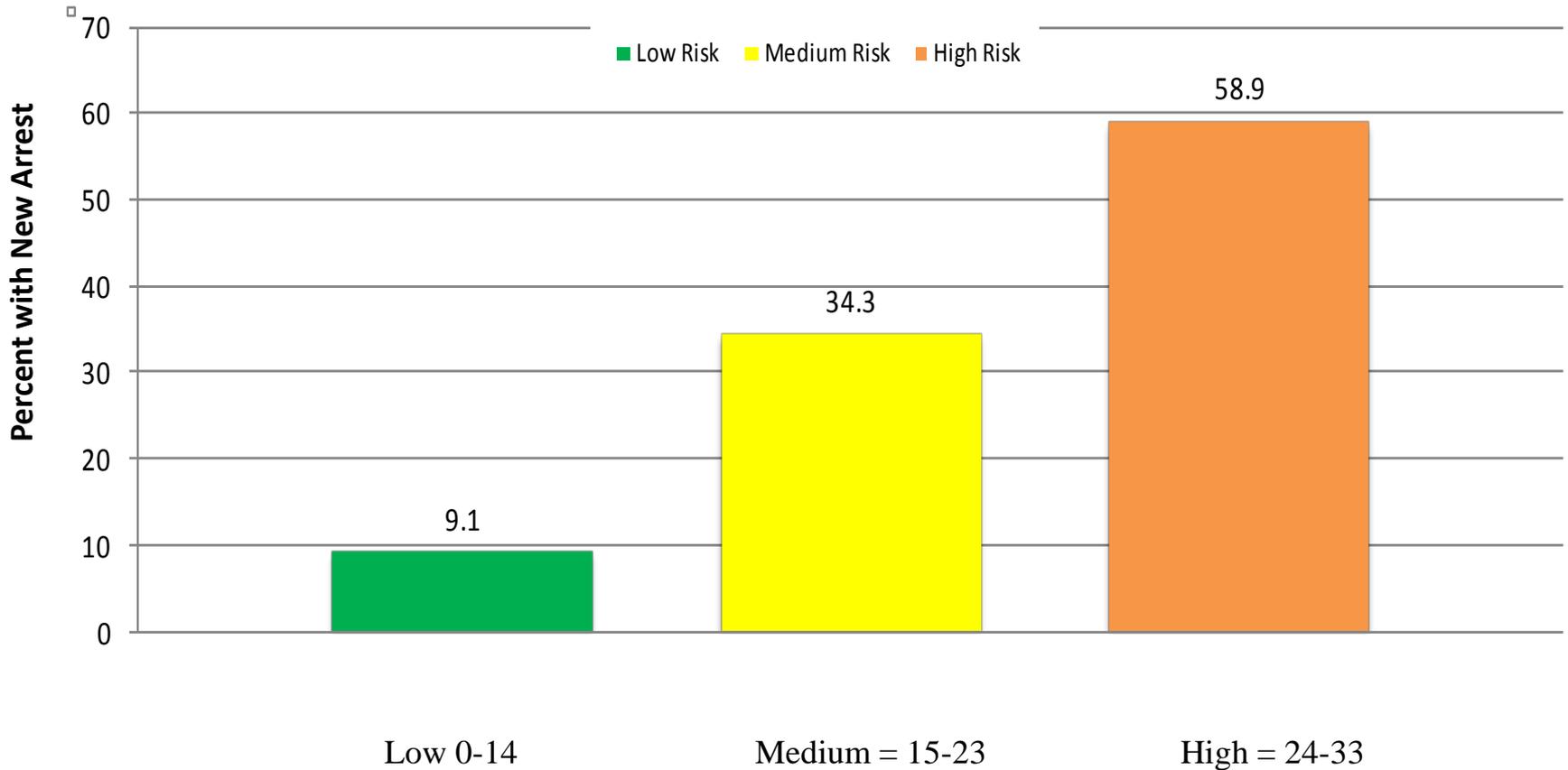
....that correctional services and interventions can be effective in reducing recidivism for youthful offenders, however, not all programs are equally effective

- The most effective programs are based on some principles of effective interventions
  - Risk (Who)
  - Need (What)
  - Treatment (How)
  - Program Integrity (How Well)

# There are Three Elements to the Risk Principle

1. Target those youth with higher probability of recidivism
2. Provide most intensive treatment to higher risk youth
3. Intensive treatment for lower risk offender can increase recidivism

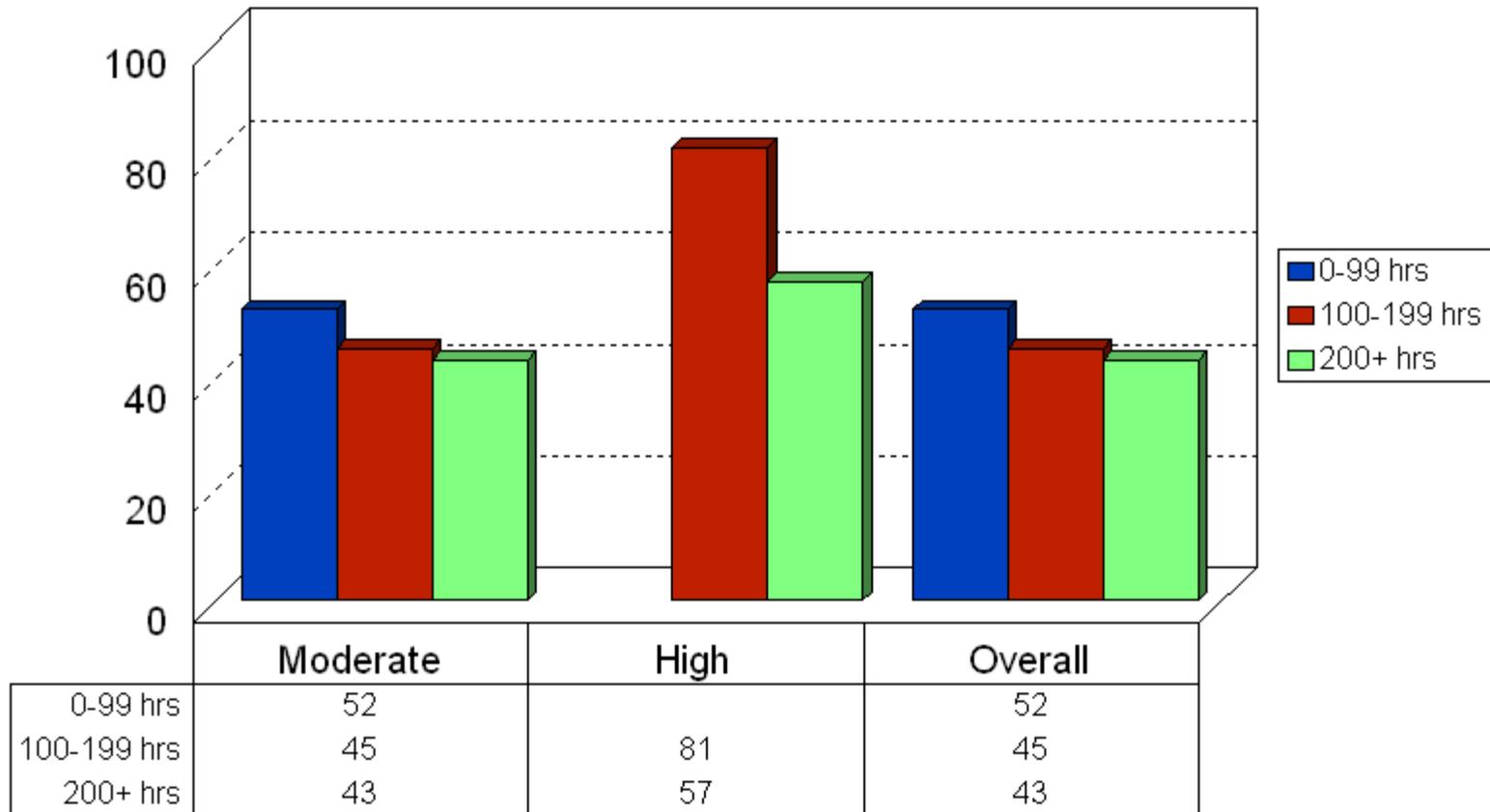
# Example of Risk Levels by Recidivism for a Community Supervision Sample



## #2: Provide Most Intensive Interventions to Higher Risk Offenders

- Higher risk youth will require much higher dosage of treatment
  - Rule of thumb: 100 hours for moderate risk
  - 200+ hours for higher risk
  - 100 hours for high risk will likely have no effect
  - Does not include work/school and other activities that are not directly addressing criminogenic risk factors

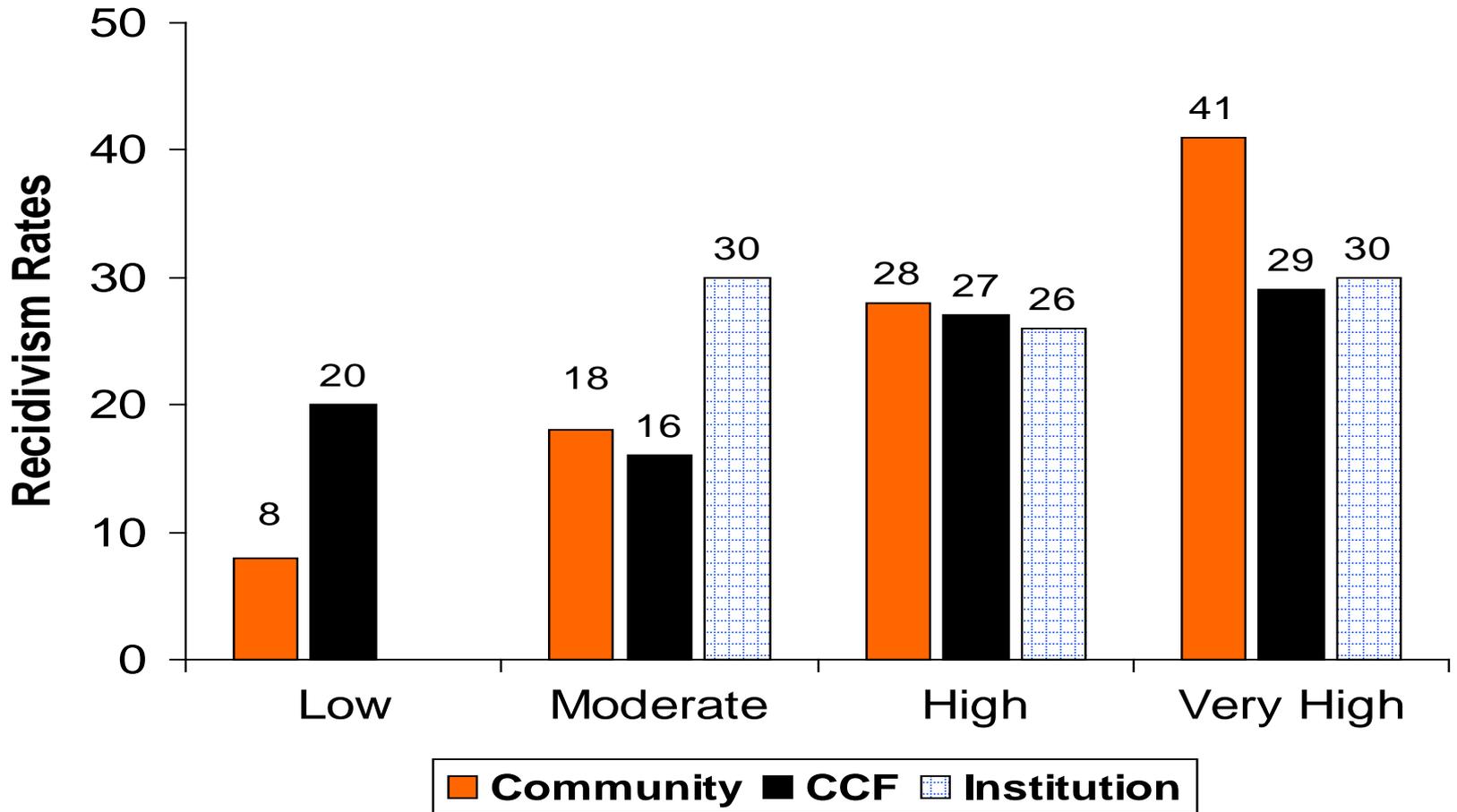
## Recidivism Rates by Intensity and Risk Level



### #3: Intensive Treatment for Low Risk Offenders will Often Increase Failure Rates

- Low risk youth will learn anti social behavior from higher risk youth
- Disrupts prosocial networks

# Risk Level by New Adjudication: Results from 2005 Ohio Study of over 14,000 Youth



# Need Principle

- Target crime producing needs and risk factors

# Major Set of Risk/Need Factors

1. Antisocial/procriminal attitudes, values, beliefs and cognitive emotional states
2. Procriminal associates and isolation from anticriminal others
3. Temperamental and anti social personality patterns conducive to criminal activity including:
  - Weak socialization
  - Impulsivity
  - Adventurous
  - Restless/aggressive
  - Egocentrism
  - A taste for risk
  - Weak problem-solving/self-regulation & coping skills
4. A history of antisocial behavior

## Major Set of Risk/Need Factors Cont.

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5. Familial factors that include criminality and a variety of psychological problems in the family of origin including:
  - Low levels of affection, caring, and cohesiveness
  - Poor parental supervision and discipline practices
  - Outright neglect and abuse
6. Low levels of personal, educational, vocational, or financial achievement
7. Low levels of involvement in prosocial leisure activities
8. Substance Abuse

Definitely *NOT* Criminogenic  
Needs

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## Dance Program Gets Juveniles Moving on the Right Track

By [Meghan Mandeville](#), News Research Reporter



Photo: Sam Forencich

The beats blaring from the high security unit of the Santa Clara County (Calif.) Juvenile Hall have a ring of rehabilitation to them. There, in a small, secure, concrete area young male offenders dance their way toward a new outlook on life.

The Juvie Jazz dance program gives young offenders in two boys units and one girls unit an opportunity to let loose on the dance floor to the music of rappers like **Tupac**, **50 Cent** and **R. Kelly**. At the same time, the juveniles are learning how to follow instructions, work together in a group and build their self-esteem.

"I don't think they are going to be professional dancers, but I want them to see the potential they have to do different things," said program creator and instructor **Ehud Krauss**. "[My goal is] to make them better human beings [and] better kids.

Aside from juvenile offenders in Santa Clara County, Krauss, who owns a dance studio in Palo Alto, Calif., teaches dance to juveniles in San Mateo County, Calif. and autistic and handicapped kids in the area.

# FREE SPIRIT DRUM CIRCLES

Patricia Prince Thomas Drum Circle Facilitator

To; Marta Daniel

Subject; Drum Circles

I am enclosing the latest research and articles on drum circles. I have been researching drum circles for the past year since experiencing one at the Southeastern Conference. I am amazed that something so basic actually boost the immune system and its fun. I am enclosing an e-mail from a friend that works in a New Zealand prison. She introduced the first drum circle in a New Zealand prison and she describes it as WOW. The staff was amazed because most clients continued drumming for two hours without stopping to smoke.

I am uncertain as to how parolees will respond to a drum circle , however I am sure it will be very positive. I realize that substance abuse and cognitive behavioral programs are probably your number one priority. I would like to introduce drum circles to the prison system. It may be cost effective preventing depression therefore saving money on antidepressants. In addition research indicates that it is stress reducing which may prevent Disciplinary Reports.

I am willing to demonstrate a drum circle free of charge to any prison within a 150 mile radius of Athens. I realize that you are very busy and I appreciate your taking the time to read over the materials that I have enclosed.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Thomas MA., MAC., LPC.,

*Patricia Thomas*





## Caught in the act: Juveniles sentenced to Shakespeare



Adjudicated youth offenders rehearsed a scene from Shakespeare's "Henry V" that they will perform tonight in Lenox. (Nancy Palmieri for The Boston Globe)

By [Louise Kennedy](#)

Globe Staff / May 18, 2010

**LENOX —** Tonight, 13 actors will take the stage at Shakespeare & Company in "Henry V." Nothing so unusual in that — except that these are teenagers, none older than 17, and they have been sentenced to perform this play.

The show is the culmination of a five-week intensive program called Shakespeare in the Courts, a nationally recognized initiative now celebrating its 10th year. Berkshire Juvenile Court Judge Judith Locke has sent these adjudicated offenders — found guilty of such adolescent crimes as fighting, drinking, stealing, and destroying property — not to lockup or conventional community service, but to four afternoons a week of acting exercises, rehearsal, and Shakespearean study.

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## **Writing Right: Handwriting Formation Therapy Aims to Reform Juveniles in Texas**

By [Meghan Mandeville](#), News Research Reporter

What's in a name? Better yet, what's in a signature? That's what some juvenile probation agencies in Texas are turning to **Treyce Benavidez-d'Gabriel** to find out.

Benavidez-d'Gabriel, a Handwriting Analyst and Formation Therapist, is working with juvenile probation agencies in several Texas counties to implement a pilot, Handwriting Formation Therapy program aimed at reducing recidivism. The handful of juveniles who will be part of the program's trial run will receive six months of Benavidez-d'Gabriel's therapy, which she says will help these young offenders clean up their acts.

"We are hoping that we are going to be able to get to [the juveniles] early enough to turn their behavior around before it becomes a repetitive issue," said Benavidez-d'Gabriel. "[I hope Handwriting Formation Therapy] will correct these kids and reduce, drastically, the recidivism rates of juveniles."

According to Benavidez-d'Gabriel, Handwriting Formation Therapy serves to change people's behavior patterns by training them to write in a different way.

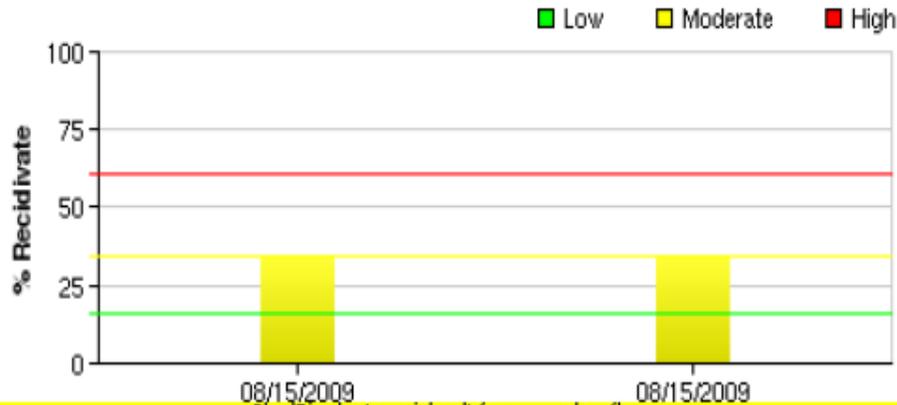
"Basically, it's behavioral modification on a neurological level," said Benavidez-d'Gabriel. "When somebody is writing something, it's their brain writing."

# Disposition Summary Report

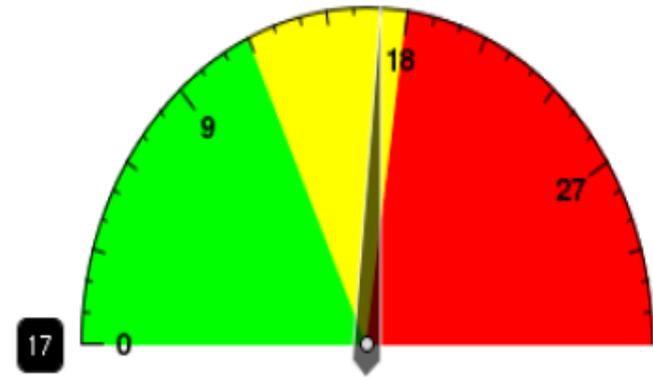
**Assessment:** Disposition Instrument

**Final Risk Level:** Moderate

*Percentage of Recidivism*



*Level of Risk*



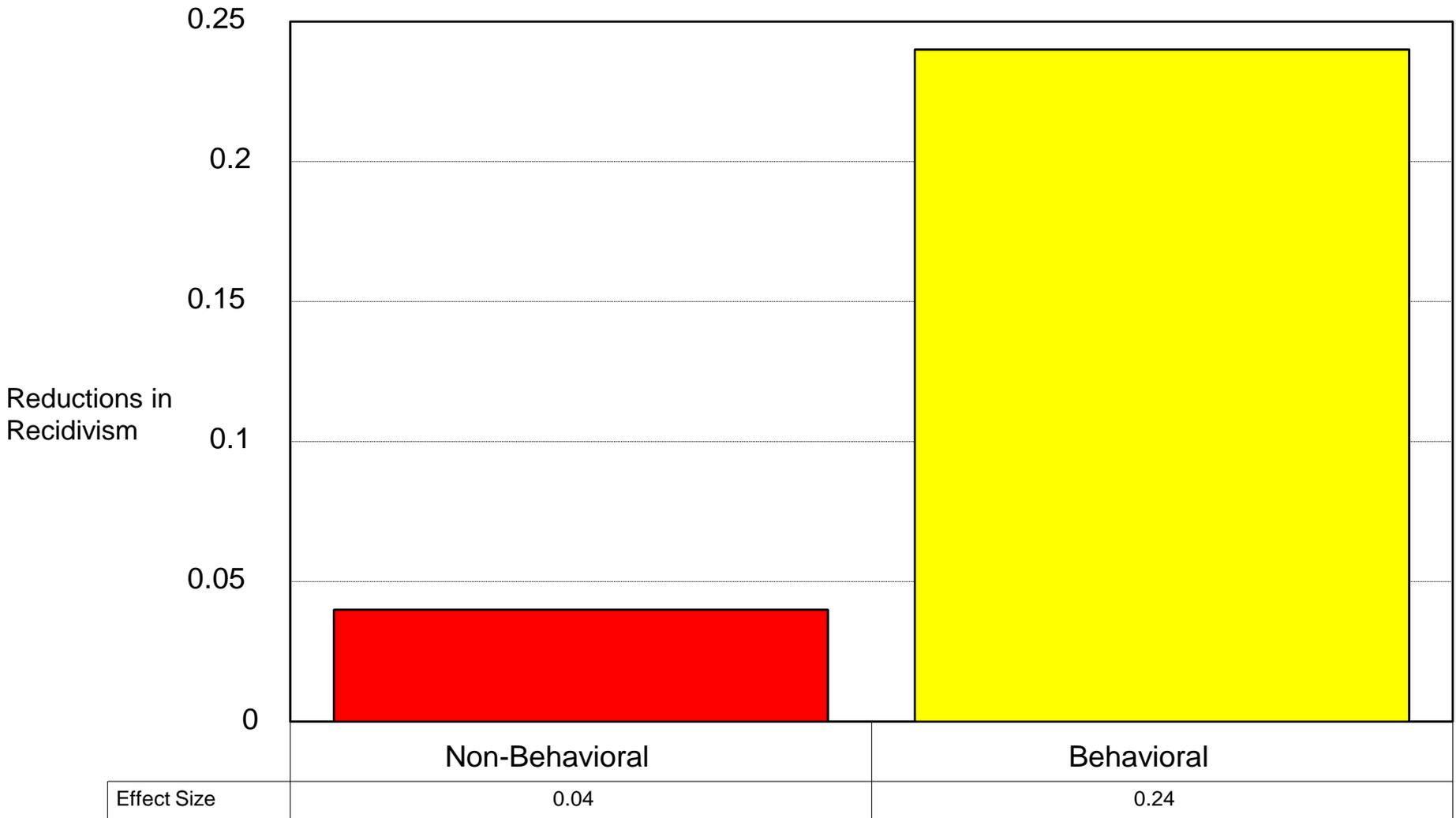
*Treatment Priorities*



# The Treatment Principle: Provide Behavioral Treatment

- Focus on current criminogenic risk/need factors
- Action oriented
- Appropriate Reinforcement/Dosage

# Type of Treatment and Effect Sizes for Youthful Offenders



Source: Dowden and Andrews (1999), What Works in Young Offender Treatment: A Meta Analysis. Forum on Correctional Research.

## Most Effective Behavioral Models

- Structured social learning where new skills and behavioral are modeled
- Family based approaches that train family on appropriate techniques
- Cognitive behavioral approaches that target criminogenic risk factors

# Family Based Interventions

- Designed to train family on behavioral approaches
  - Functional Family Therapy
  - Multi-Systemic Therapy
  - Teaching Family Model
  - Strengthening Families Program (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)

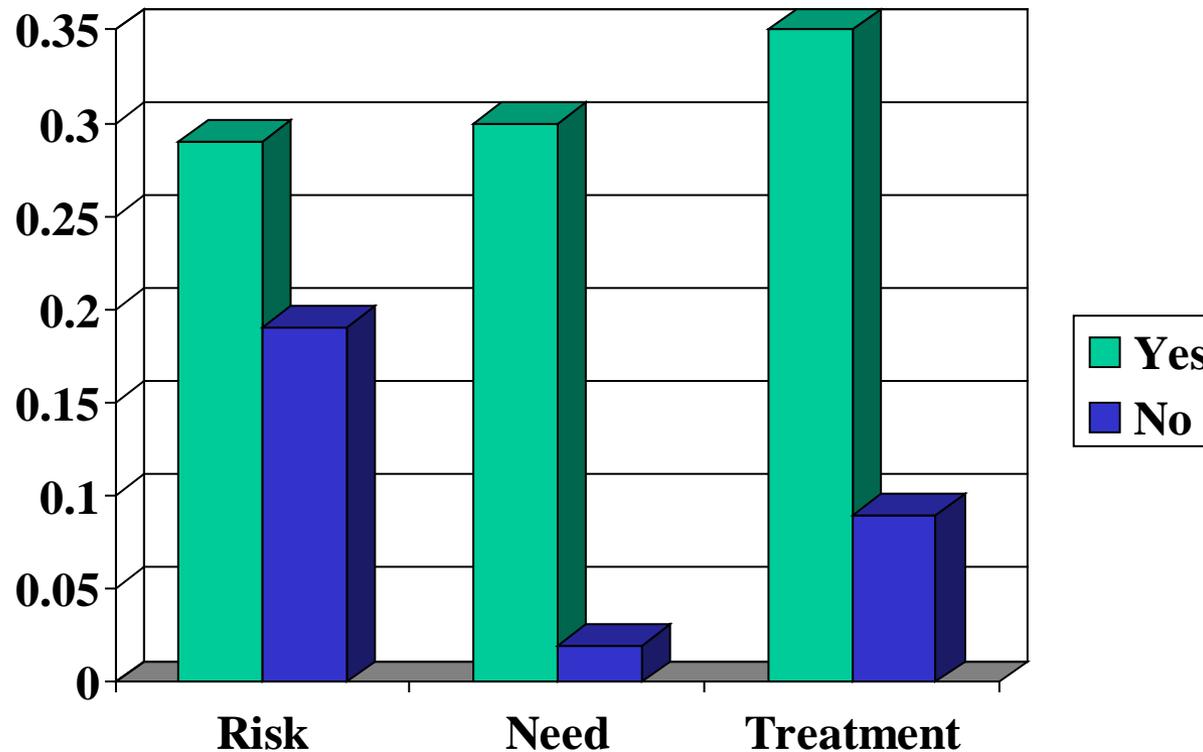
# Effectiveness of Family Based Intervention: Results from Meta Analysis

- 38 primary studies with 53 effect tests
- Average reduction in recidivism= 21%

Hoowever, much variability was present  
(-0.17 - +0.83)

Dowden & Andrews, 2003

# Mean Effect Sizes: Whether or not the family intervention adheres to the principles



# **The Four Principles of Cognitive Intervention**

- 1. Thinking affects behavior**
- 2. Antisocial, distorted, unproductive irrational thinking can lead to antisocial and unproductive behavior**
- 3. Thinking can be influenced**
- 4. We can change how we feel and behave by changing what we think**

# Recent Meta-Analysis of Cognitive Behavioral Treatment for Offenders by Landenberger & Lipsey (2005)\*

- Reviewed 58 studies:
  - 19 random samples
  - 23 matched samples
  - 16 convenience samples
- Found that on average CBT reduced recidivism by 25%, but the most effective configurations found more than 50% reductions

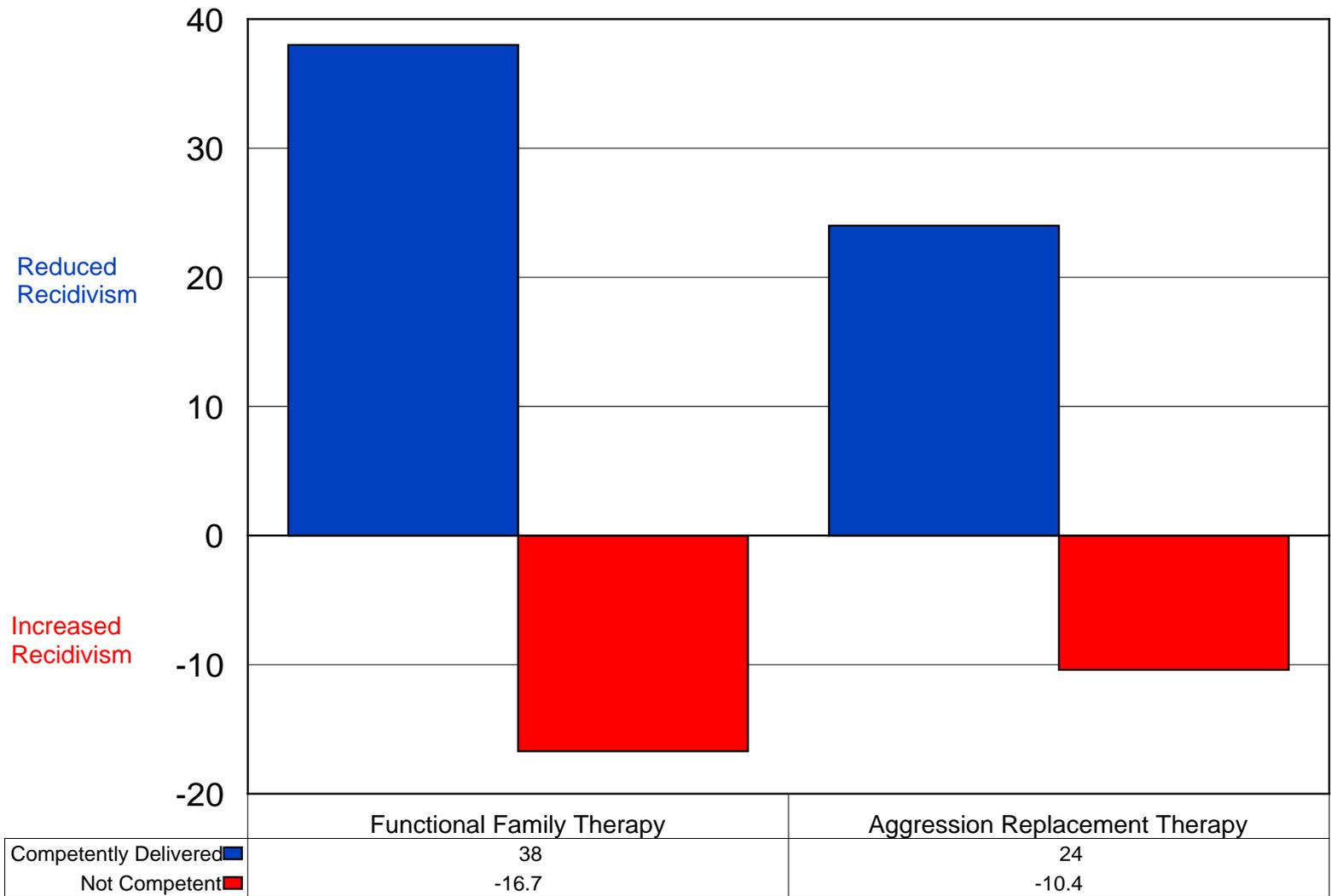
## Significant Findings (effects were stronger if):

- Sessions per week (2 or more) - **RISK**
- Implementation monitored - **FIDELITY**
- Staff trained on CBT - **FIDELITY**
- Higher proportion of treatment completers - **RESPONSIVITY**
- Higher risk offenders - **RISK**
- Higher if CBT is combined with other services - **NEED**

## The Fidelity Principle: Make Sure Programs Are Delivered With Fidelity and Integrity

- Includes both external and internal quality assurance

# Effects of Quality Programs Delivery for Evidenced Based Programs for Youth Offenders



Source: Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Research-Based Programs for Juvenile Offenders. January 2004. Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

# What Doesn't Work with Offenders?

Lakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. However, in corrections, and in other affairs, we often try other strategies, including the following:

- Buy a stronger whip.
- Change riders
- Say things like “This is the way we always have ridden this horse.”
- Appoint a committee to study the horse.
- Arrange to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
- Create a training session to increase our riding ability.
- Harness several dead horses together for increased speed.
- Declare that “No horse is too dead to beat.”
- Provide additional funding to increase the horse’s performance.
- Declare the horse is “better, faster, and cheaper” dead.
- Study alternative uses for dead horses.
- Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

# Ineffective Approaches

- Programs that cannot maintain fidelity
- Programs that do not target criminogenic needs
- Drug prevention classes focused on fear and other emotional appeals
- Shaming offenders
- Drug education programs
- Non-directive, client centered approaches
- Bibliotherapy
- Freudian approaches
- Talking cures
- Self-Help programs
- Vague unstructured rehabilitation programs
- Medical model
- Fostering self-regard (self-esteem)
- “Punishing smarter” (boot camps, scared straight, etc.)