Youth Justice Programs Framework

2016 - 2019

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# Overview[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) Youth Justice Directorate is responsible for contributing to community safety by leading the provision of programs and services aimed at addressing the various factors which contribute to a young person’s offending. The goal of such programs is to reduce offending behaviour and acknowledge victims of crime. Youth Justice leads collaboration with a number of government and non-government organisations to provide programs and services for young people. Youth Justice is responsible for ensuring the integrity, accountability and overall quality of these interventions.

The Youth Justice Programs Framework is divided into three parts. *Part One: Strategic Context* provides a brief overview of the key strategic drivers and evidence based principles which underpin the Programs Framework along with the definitions of program classification streams. It also discusses the shared features of effective criminogenic programs.

*Part Two: Culture for Change* outlines how the systemic environment and ‘culture’ within Youth Justice is impacted by partnerships, individual assessment protocols and informed referrals for programs. It also provides an outline for the collection of population-based information in order to inform program and service provision.

*Part Three: Program Delivery* sets out the Youth Justice program governance structures, along with program and service feedback and evaluation criteria.

# Part One: Strategic Context[[2]](#footnote-2)

Youth Justice Programs are guided by the following key strategic documents.

* [DCSI Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2015-2018](http://teams.dfc.sa.gov.au/sites/Youthjustice/Youth%20Justice%20Library/Youth%20Justice%20Strategic%20Plan%202015-2018.pdf)
* [Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators Principles of Youth Justice in Australia in 2014](http://teams.dfc.sa.gov.au/sites/Youthjustice/Youth%20Justice%20Library/Australasian%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Administrators%20Principles%20October%202014.pdf)
* [Youth Justice Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Strategy 2015-2018](http://teams.dfc.sa.gov.au/sites/Youthjustice/Youth%20Justice%20Library/Youth%20Justice%20Aboriginal%20Cultural%20Inclusion%20Strategy%202015-2018.pdf)
* [Youth Justice Service Delivery Policy](http://teams.dfc.sa.gov.au/sites/Youthjustice/Youth%20Justice%20Library/Service%20Delivery%20Policy.pdf)
* [The Model Charter for Children and Young People Detained in Youth Justice Facilities](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/ACCG%20Model%20YJ%20Charter.pdf)
* [Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators Standards for Juvenile Custodial Facilities, 1999](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annexure%20H%20-%20AJJA%20Standards.pdf)

In particular, Youth Justice programs are guided by the need to foster sector and community partnerships to achieve effective and positive outcomes for children and young people.

## Youth Justice Population[[3]](#footnote-3)

On average, approximately 400 young people are under the supervision of Youth Justice on a given day. Of that total:

* Approximately 300-350 are in the community and 50-60 in custody.
* In custody, approximately 50% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 10% are female.
* In the community, approximately 35% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 20% are female.
* Approximately 50% of young people in custody are unsentenced.
* The average length of time in custody is approximately 50 days.
* The average length of community-based supervision is approximately 170 days.

Recent needs analyses conducted by Youth Justice in 2015 have shown the criminogenic needs of the population are varied, however the key areas of need for both custodial and community populations were broadly related to:

* Substance misuse.
* History of abuse, trauma and/or neglect.
* Mental health.
* Anti-social peer associations.
* Poor literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills.
* Verbal and physical aggression.
* Impulsivity.

## Guiding Research and Literature

* Risk, Needs, Responsivity Principles
* Good Lives Model
* Multifactor Offender Readiness Model

# Characteristics of Effective Programs

Effective programs require comprehensive assessment of needs to assist children and young people to acquire the skills and resources needed to succeed in the community, and to decrease offending behaviour. Alongside the need for identifying a young person’s needs and goals, there is strong research evidence from the international literature to suggest that certain types of programs are more effective than others. Research[[4]](#footnote-4) shows the most effective programs are those which fall within the broad categories of:

* Restorative approaches.
* Skill building.
* Counselling.
* Multiple services.

In general, programs which routinely produce the largest effect on decreasing offending behaviour use therapeutically oriented approaches instead of control oriented ones, target high-risk young people and provide a level of service which is matched to the risk level of a participant, and have established intervention protocols - along with the ability to monitor service delivery to ensure it adheres to the intended protocols.

However, within the types of programs outlined above, outcomes can vary significantly. The particular characteristics described below assist in maximising the likelihood a program will be successful in decreasing offending behaviour[[5]](#footnote-5).

**Program integrity**

**Multi-modal**

**Sufficient intensity**

**Developmentally / intellectually responsive**

**Effective Programs**

**Young people involved in development**

# Definitions

The term ‘program’ refers to a planned sequence of structured interventions directed at bringing about measurable learning and behaviour change. The overarching goal of all programs is that participation will support reintegration with the community, and contribute to lowering risk of re-offending, thereby improving community safety.

Programs are distinguished from ‘activities’ in that they are interventions which are goal-orientated, designed to target specific areas of criminogenic and / or rehabilitative need and can be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

The term ‘service’ is used to describe a broad range of interventions which are individually tailored to suit a young person’s specific and changing needs. Services still target underlying factors which contribute to a young person’s offending behaviour.

Program streams covered by this framework include:

# Part Two: Culture for Change

‘Culture for change’ refers to the environmental and systemic culture which can be influenced to assist a young person to work towards change in their life. These factors combine to form custodial and community-based environments in which a young person is supported by a Youth Justice culture which prioritises the identification of opportunities for success, rather than concentrating on challenges, deficits or past mistakes.

A ‘Culture for Change’ imparts influence on whether custodial and community programs are utilised in an optimal manner.

# 2.1 Individual Needs (Fact Sheet B)

Underpinning any co-ordinated delivery of Youth Justice programs is the need for the accurate identification of a young person’s individual needs, both criminogenic (directly related to their offending), and non-criminogenic (related to personal wellbeing and development). This allows for the development of client-focused goals, which ensures program referrals are goal-focused and based on the specific needs of the young person. Individual needs include factors such as:

**Cultural Family / social Substance use**

**Religious Health / developmental Behaviour / emotional**

# 2.2 Population Needs (Fact Sheet B)

Periodic needs analyses are required in order to provide specific insights into custodial and community populations to inform program development. Needs analyses collect population level information including, but not limited to population demographics (age, gender, culture, child protection history), Victorian Offending Needs Indicator for Youth (VONIY) Intervention Levels, and criminogenic needs.

Consultation with young people is integral to any analysis of population needs. Different groups within the population requiring consideration are related to:

**Age Abuse and trauma Ethnicity / culture**

**Gender Disability status Geographic location**

# 2.3 Partnership

Youth Justice staff actively work in partnership with government, non-government and community services and agencies to achieve client outcomes, through collaborative approaches and referral for services. Key partnerships include:

Inter-agency Partnership between DCSI Youth Justice and DECD (Education), DECD (Families SA), SA Health and the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People.

Youth Justice Partnership between business units to maintain efficient communication and continuity of services. Includes collaboration with Youth Justice Cultural Champions.

Program Specific Partnership with program providers of internally and externally-facilitated programs. Includes partnerships with cultural communities.

**Partnership with Young People** allows individuals to be heard in decision making processes, program development and review, as well as to make decisions regarding their own lives. (Fact Sheet C)

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# 2.4 Informed Referrals

The Youth Justice Programs Framework plays an integral role in ensuring referrals are made which link the appropriate young person with the appropriate program or service at a time which is likely to allow the young person to address their needs. Factors which ensure a referral is ‘informed’ include:

* Referrals are based on the assessment of individual needs.
* Pertinent information on available programs is easily accessible for Youth Justice staff, other providers and young people.
* The referrer involves the young person in the referral process.
* The referral is informed by formal assessment protocols such as an individual Case Plan or a Community Service Order Program Assessment. This includes the support available to the young person.
* The referrer can assess and influence whether a young person is willing and motivated to participate.

## Informed Participant Commitment

* Involves the inclusion of a young person in the referral process.
* Assists a young person to understand that while their participation is voluntary a commitment to participate in a program includes the assumption they will complete the program, and that withdrawal from a program may have consequences including notification to courts and impact on custodial phase progression.

# Part Three: Program Delivery

‘Program Delivery’ outlines the factors which make up the identification, development, facilitation and monitoring of programs for young people within custody and the community. A brief summary of the evidence based characteristics of effective justice programs is provided, with a particular emphasis on facilitation skills and methods. The cyclic nature of the ‘Program Delivery’ aspect of the Framework depicts how programs and services are endorsed by the Program Review Panel, facilitated, monitored, evaluated and reviewed.

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# 3.1 Programs Governance

The implementation of the Programs Framework is governed by a multi-layered structure coordinated by the Principal Programs Officer, Youth Justice under the direction of the Principal Psychologist and Manager Strategy, Policy and Reporting.

## Program Strategy Group

This group has the role of engaging with external stakeholders to identify Youth Justice program gaps and strategic needs. The group reviews feedback from the Program Review Panel regarding trends, suggests policy recommendations and identifies opportunities for collaborative responses and potential partnerships for program development and implementation. The group meets quarterly.

## Program Review Panel (Fact Sheet D)

The Youth Justice Programs Review Panel is comprised of senior Youth Justice representatives and undertakes reviews of program submissions for proposed programs to be delivered to Youth Justice young people. In addition, the Program Review Panel is tasked with monitoring and tracking client and program outcomes and is responsible for informing the Program Strategy Group regarding emerging or ongoing programs-related initiatives and challenges. The panel meets bi-monthly.

## Programs Communication and Liaison

The Youth Justice Principal Programs Officer acts as the central point for all programs-related communication. This ensures communication between Youth Justice business units, Youth Justice programs governance groups / panels and program providers remains consistent and efficient. Lines of communication are depicted below.

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**Program Providers**

**Adelaide Youth Training Centre**

**Principal Programs Officer**

**Program Review Panel**

**Program Strategy Group**

**Director, Youth Justice**

**Community Youth Justice**

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# 3.2 Program Facilitation (Fact Sheet E)

A facilitator works with young people through a planned sequence of structured interventions, to generate measurable learning and behaviour change. Programs can be facilitated on a group or individual basis by Youth Justice staff members, as well as representatives from external organisations.

## Expectations of Facilitators

All stakeholder partner organisations and their representatives acting as program facilitators will be expected to uphold high levels of professional integrity along with possessing specific characteristics which have been shown to have positive impact on program outcomes. All provider organisations will be expected to provide details regarding facilitator experience and training and facilitators will be obliged to complete Youth Justice feedback requirements as requested.

Facilitators will be expected to possess the expereince to be responsive to the learning styles of participants while also being skilled at adapting facilitation methods to suit the needs of the audience.

Facilitation will be monitored through formal and informal mechanisms including:

* Analysis of program integrity and outcomes by the Program Review Panel.
* Participant Feedback Forms (as outlined in section 3.3).
* Observations from Youth Justice staff (section 3.3).
* Program Review processes (section 3.5).

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# 3.3 Feedback (Fact Sheet F)

As part of the Program Review Panel endorsement process, all program providers must make a commitment to complete and/or facilitate the following feedback protocols. The information gathered will be communicated to the Program Review Panel and will inform Program Review Meetings with program providers. Feedback mechanisms include:

* Verbal and written provider feedback.
* Verbal and written participant feedback.
* Feedback from Youth Justice staff.

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# 3.4 Program Evaluation (Fact Sheet G)

There are several types of evaluation that can be conducted to assess programs. The most common are:

Formative evaluation ensures that a program or program activity is feasible, appropriate, and acceptable before it is fully implemented. It is usually conducted when a new program or activity is being developed or when an existing one is being adapted or modified. Program Review Panel processes are an example of formative evaluation.

Process/implementation evaluation determines whether program activities have been implemented as intended. This can include direct or recorded observation of program delivery.

Outcome/effectiveness evaluation measures program effects in the target population by assessing progress in the outcomes or intended outcome objectives. An example of this is the use of a range of different pre-post assessment measures.

Impact evaluation assesses program effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goals of behaviour change.

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# 3.5 Program Review (Fact Sheet H)

Outcome Measures are initially used to determine a young person’s baseline function prior to their involvement in a program, and is then used periodically throughout their participation and/or at the completion of a program. The purpose of an outcome measure is to determine a young person’s individual progress, and overall program efficacy when completed over time with multiple participants.

## Program Completion Review

Upon completion of all programs, participant, provider and staff feedback will be collated and analysed with the intention of reviewing participant numbers and retention rates, reasons for withdrawals (if any), program success in meeting stated goals and program success in meeting the needs of the population. This subjective information will be monitored by the Program Review Panel and will inform discussions at the Program Review Meeting.

## Program Review Meeting

Following the completion of all programs, a meeting will take place between Youth Justice and the program providers/facilitators. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss provider and participant feedback, ascertain reasons for participation retention / withdrawal, address any concerns with regards to operational or program feedback matters, inform future amendments to the program delivery/content, gather program-specific information in order to feed back to the Youth Justice Program Review Panel and discuss any issues which are required to be addressed to continue to facilitate the program.

1. The Framework is supported by a number of ‘Fact Sheets’ which provide expanded detail on the Framework content. Areas supported by a ‘Fact Sheet’ will be highlighted throughout the document. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Some hyperlinks are only accessible to internal DCSI staff. For external stakeholders, contact Principal Programs Officer, Youth Justice, for an electronic copy of these documents [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For details on yearly data, refer to [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lipsey, M (2011) “Effective Interventions for Juvenile Offenders: Using Meta-Analysis to Bridge from Research to Practice” *Antisocial behaviour and crime: Contributions of developmental and evaluation research to prevention and intervention*; Hogrefe Publishing, pp. 181-198 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For more information, refer to YJ Programs Framework Fact Sheet A. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)