

Source: Rosenblatt, J. A., & Furlong, M. J. (1998). Outcomes in a system of care for youths with emotional and behavioral disorders: An examination of differential change across clinical profiles. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 7(2), 217-232.

The authors report preliminary findings for youth served in the CMHS-funded Multiagency Integrated System of Care (MISC) in Santa Barbara County. It is one of the first publications to present site-specific outcomes.

The article presents results for 87 youth for whom 6-month follow-up data were available. Almost three-quarters of the youngsters were boys, the average age was 13.7 years, and the group was ethnically diverse being 43% Latino, 38% Caucasian, 16% African American, and 3% Asian American. Two-thirds were referred to the MISC by probation agencies.

Building on their earlier work, Rosenblatt and Furlong divided referred youth into four groups, based on individual risk factors, number of prior arrests, CAFAS scores, and CBCL scores:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Troubled               | Primary problems in emotional functioning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Troubling              | Primary problems in delinquency and related behaviors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Troubled and Troubling | Combination of both types of problems                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At-Risk                | Multiple risk factors but less severe problems        |

The authors made this distinction because they believed the results of studies that combine the outcomes of all youngsters may produce misleading findings. They hypothesized that progress should be expected mainly in the area of greatest need as treatment would primarily target areas of major concern.

Significant progress was found on at least one outcome measure in all groups, except for the at-risk group, which had only nine youngsters and whose scores at entry into treatment were within the normal range. This overall positive result is encouraging, although, as the authors point out, their sample sizes were small, there was the possibility of regression to the mean, and they had no comparison group.

The authors also found partial support for their prediction that progress would likely occur in the area of greatest need. While youth in each group did improve in different areas, these differences were not significant.

Perhaps the most encouraging finding was that the two oldest groups and the two groups most involved in delinquent activity ("Troubling" in which the average age was 15.2 years and "Troubled and Troubling" in which the average age was 14.4 years) showed significant improvement on the CBCL Total Problem Scale and the CAFAS Total Problem Scale. While the study had a number of limitations, as already indicated, this finding remains encouraging because, as the authors assert, "the majority of research...suggests juvenile delinquents are not amenable to treatment." The study also helps make a case for assessing outcomes for youth based on a system of classification, rather than combining them into one group.