

Transforming Our Responses to Youthful Offenders: Preventative, Proactive and Trauma-Informed Strategies

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Bio

Danielle Cooper received her Ph.D. in Criminology (with a minor in Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits) from the University of Florida in 2015. She currently conducts research and teaches university classes in the areas of youths and young adults, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, criminological theory, and sex offending.

In addition to her work as a Professor and Researcher, she is also a Certified Prevention Professional (certified in FL and CT) and a Restorative Practices Trainer (trained with IIRP) who collaborates with nonprofits, state agencies, and community organizations as a consultant, evaluator, and trainer. Through her work in the community, she helps to amplify the voice of key stakeholders such as youth and their parents, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and youth serving organizations.

Narrative

By the end of this session, participants will be prepared to better respond to delinquent and criminal behaviors engaged in by youthful offenders (individuals under the age of 24). Reactions by authority figures can vary from very punitive to very lenient. How to strike the right balance is often unclear, but advances in research, policy, and practice have provided us with guidance. First, transformative justice requires challenging existing understandings of behaviors that lead to justice-involvement. Next, prevention science highlights the need for targeted responses with individuals who are most impacted by the justice systems. Finally, a trauma-informed approach advocates that most people—but especially youth—are deserving of a second chance, regardless of the nature of their behavior. Lessons learned from juvenile justice research and programming are integrated into this interactive discussion. Additionally, participants will be empowered to use their authority and power to build stronger supportive relationships with youth, as well as their families and communities.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the status of the criminal and juvenile justice systems in the United States
- Relate youthful offending with adolescent development through the mid-20s
- Explain the differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches
- Describe trauma-informed and restorative inquiry skills