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**ADAPTING A HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIPS MENTAL HEALTH  
PROMOTION PROGRAM FOR DIVERSE  
YOUTH: PILOT PROCESS WITH  
LGBTQ YOUTH & IN A CORRECTIONS  
SETTING**

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Western  Centre for School Mental Health

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**OBJECTIVES**



Healthy Relationships Plus Program

Youth Justice Pilot

LGBTQ Pilot

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## EVOLUTION OF MY RESEARCH



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## WHY SHOULD WE FOCUS ON YOUTH OFFENDERS?

- Over 1/3 of Canadian youth have engaged in delinquent behaviour by age 14
- 5 to 15% of youth offenders continue offending into adulthood
- Youth offending has been linked with many negative outcomes:
  - Psychological
  - Physical health
  - Social
  - Academic
  - Employment
- Delinquency is associated with significant societal costs



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## RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

### Risk Factors

- Poor social skills
- Poor problem solving
- Low self-esteem
- Deviant peer group
- Family disruption
- Neighbourhood violence

### Protective Factors

- Social competence
- Good problem solving and communication skills
- Healthy self-regulation
- Prosocial peers
- Stable family
- Access to support services



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## PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS

- Reduce recidivism and facilitate prosocial life skills
- Ingredients of effective programming:
  - Therapeutic philosophy “*children first, offenders second*”
  - Target multiple risk factors
  - Promote social and cognitive skill building
  - Highly structured and manualized
  - Evidence-based




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## WHAT IS THE FOURTH R?

- A relationship-based approach to prevent adolescent violence and related risk behaviours
- School based comprehensive prevention approach. Units include:
  - Personal Safety & Injury Prevention
  - Substance Use, Addictions & Related Behaviours
  - Human Development and Sexual Health
  - Healthy Eating
- This program has been rigorously studied, including randomized controlled trials and longitudinal studies




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## EMPIRICAL SUPPORT

- Fourth R evaluations have demonstrated improvements in positive functioning and reductions in risk behaviours
  - Increased relationship skills and peer resistance (Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo, Hughes, & Ellis, 2012)
  - Buffered the relationship between child maltreatment and youth delinquency (Crooks, Scott, Wolfe, Chiodo, & Killip, 2007)
- Longitudinal data showed:
  - Decreased rates of dating violence and increased rates of condom use (Wolfe, et al., 2009)
  - Buffering effect for maltreated youth was maintained (Crooks, Scott, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2011)
- Fourth R program saves \$1,900/student in universal settings with respect to violent delinquency (Crooks, et al., 2017)




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### HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PLUS PROGRAM (HRPP)

- Evidence-informed small groups program
- Targets the prevention of violence through the promotion of positive, healthy relationships
- Intended for youth between the ages of 12 and 18
- 14 sessions
- Flexibility around delivery



Healthy Relationships Plus Program  
A health and wellness program designed to help adolescents and young adults build healthy relationships

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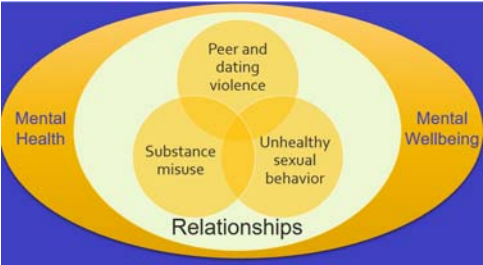
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### THE ADOLESCENT RISK TRIAD: THE RELATIONSHIP CONNECTION



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### HRPP WITH YOUTH OFFENDERS

Rationale for Implementation	Potential Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingredients of effective programming:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Therapeutic philosophy "children first, offenders second"</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Target multiple risk factors</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote social and cognitive skill building</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Highly structured and manualized</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evidence-informed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma</li> <li>• Peer contagion</li> <li>• Frequent admissions and discharges</li> </ul>

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## STUDY

<p><b>Phase I</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the acceptability and feasibility of the programs in a youth justice setting?</li> <li>2. What were the successes and challenges associated with implementation?</li> <li>3. What modifications should be made to the program and why?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Phase II</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the acceptability and feasibility of the adapted programs in a youth justice setting?</li> <li>2. What were the successes and challenges associated with implementation?</li> <li>3. Are there observed differences between program group and comparison group?</li> <li>4. Given heterogeneity of youth offenders, which youth was the program most and least effective for?</li> </ol>
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## PARTICIPANTS

- 2 youth custody facilities
- Facilitators
  - 34 trained (67% females)
- Administrators
- Youth
  - Phase I: *n* = 60 to 80
  - Phase II: *n* = 80 to 100

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Measures	Phase I	Phase II
<b>ADMINISTRATOR</b>		
Interviews	■	■
<b>FACILITATORS</b>		
De-identified attendance tracking sheets	■	■
Session tracking sheets	■	■
Implementation survey	■	■
Focus groups	■	■
<b>YOUTH</b>		
Pre-survey		■
Post-survey		■
Interviews		■

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### PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Male and female co-facilitators
- Personal space issues
- Workbook for youth
- Booster sessions (30-60-90)
- 2 hour training for all correctional staff




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### IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE: SUCCESSES

- Facilitators report high levels of satisfaction:
  - 83% reported implementation was a positive experience
  - 100% would recommend HRPP to a colleague
  - 100% indicated the program was beneficial for their youth

*Excellent program! Youth have been very responsive to the interactivity of it and have stated that it is their favourite program that we offer. It has brought to light topics that are not talked about often, but are much needed in the correctional environment.*

*The participants appeared to be more aware and realized how unhealthy some of their relationships have been.*

*They learned a lot and they applied it, especially when dealing with each other in the group.*




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### IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGES

- The biggest challenges for facilitators were:
  - **TIME CONSTRAINTS**- 60% reported time frames were difficult to meet
  - **EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**- 40% reported disruptions and changes to the facility's typical schedule
  - **MANY YOUTH WERE ABSENT**- 40% reported the challenge of maintaining stable group numbers

*Guys coming and going for numerous reasons*

*It is hard keeping group numbers up throughout entire program due to being a remand setting where there are many releases and transfers*




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## IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE: MODIFICATIONS

- 100% of facilitators reported that they made modifications to the program
- Reasons for modifications:
  - **ADAPATED SCENARIOS** - 100% adapted scenarios to be more relevant to the youth
  - **MEETING THE YOUTH'S NEEDS**- 100% modified content to accommodate the youth's needs

*"Lame", "dumb", and "stupid"*

*Some of the lower functioning youth have difficulty grasping the material or attending to the material*




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To what extent did youth in the HRPP...	% Somewhat or Very Much
...enjoy the program?	100%
...participate in group activities?	100%
...learn about healthy relationships?	83%
...learn about the connections between relationships and substance use/addiction?	67%
...learn about the connections between relationships and mental health?	67%
...learn about the dangers of misusing prescription drugs?	67%
...learn about the dangers of using illicit drugs?	67%
...develop healthy coping strategies?	67%
...improve strategies for helping a friend with mental health challenges?	83%
...demonstrate improved communication skills in their role plays?	100%
...demonstrate improved problem solving in their group discussions?	83%
...demonstrate skills in making an apology?	83%
...provide support to each other around difficult issues?	83%
...develop a better sense of where to seek help for themselves or a friend?	100%
...learn strategies for seeking help for themselves or a friend?	83%




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## YOUTH STRENGTHS

*It's certainly resiliency. A lot of these kids come with horror stories, their existence are absolute horror stories, the trauma and the abuse that they've endured, and they can wake up in the morning and they can smile. That is the strength and the power of the human spirit.*

*You know it's amazing. For as much of a bad rep that some of our youth get, how resilient they are.*

*Bar none, resilience. These guys have been through anything and everything and it doesn't matter what's been thrown at them, they are all survivors.*

*They are survivors, their biggest strength is the stuff that they've survived through.*

*The greatest strength that they have is resilience, their ability to be elastic. I am constantly amazed by it.*




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- For more information about the programs, please visit:  
<https://youthrelationships.org/>

- Presenter Information:  
Amanda Kerry (akerry@uwo.ca)



The Fourth R  
Strategies for Healthy  
Youth Relationships



Healthy Relationships  
Plus Program

A Fourth R small groups program  
to promote healthy relationships  
and positive mental health



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