Safe and Supportive Schools
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Violence Prevention: School-Based Approaches to Conduct Problems

WEBINAR QUESTION AND ANSWER SUMMARY

On June 8 and 9, 2011, the Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center (Center) hosted a Webinar, entitled *Violence Prevention: School-Based Approaches to Conduct Problems.* During the session, the presenter, Denise C. Gottfredson, Ph.D., a Professor at University of Maryland, received several questions from the audience. Since the presenter could not answer all of the questions during the event, the Center has prepared the following Webinar Question and Answer Summary with responses to each question. For additional information, please email or call the Center (sssta@air.org; 1-800-258-8413).

Q1. Do any of these studies take bullying as a crime into consideration?

Denise Gottfredson: The National Crime Victimization Survey does ask about bullying but the questions are different from the victimization data I presented in this Webinar. I haven't presented the bullying data from National Crime Victimization Survey because there was a separate Webinar on bullying. National Center for Education Statistics reports regularly on school bullying data in the "Indicators of School Safety" reports. The most recent report is:

Robers, S., Zhang, J., and Truman, J. (2010). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010* (NCES 2011-002/NCJ 230812). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

This publication can be downloaded from the World Wide Web at http://nces.ed.gov or http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov.

Q2. It can be a challenge to sustain focus on new programs due to changing priorities in schools. Do you have any recommendations about how to maintain that focus?

Denise Gottfredson: Yes, that is a challenge. I think that that really points to why it's so important to have a long-term outlook and a long-term plan. If a school engages in a solid planning activity that uses data to identify the problems they're facing and then uses data to select programs that are focused on that particular problem, I think it's more likely that a school would be able to

maintain the focus, especially if they are able to generate local support and enthusiasm around their plan.

Q3. To what extent have the incidents or severity of violent behavior by girls changed?

Denise Gottfredson: That's being debated now. I discussed during the Webinar how the gender gap in a lot of these problem behaviors has been narrowing over time. So there's been a lot of debate about exactly how much of that narrowing of the gap is due to actual behavior changes with girls increasing their violent behavior as opposed to changes in official reactions to the behavior. It really is too soon to tell.

There are some researchers who show that in fact the police have been arresting girls at a higher rate than they used to for similar behaviors, but then there is other research that shows that the actual behaviors have been changing as well. There's no doubt that we see an increase in rates of arrests and so forth, we just don't know how much of it is due to increasing violence and how much is due to reactions of adults.

Q4. What are some of the best programs to work with girls who are experiencing these issues?

Denise Gottfredson: There was a recent volume on girls and crime that addresses your question. The book citation is: Zahn, Margoret (Ed.) (2008). *The Delinquent Girl*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

My impression is that it doesn't seem to be necessary to develop specific programs just for girls because the same risk factors are operative for girls and boys. Just increasing the targeting of girls for the same programs that we know already work should be effective. It doesn't seem necessary in general to develop special programs for girls.

Q5. What about isolating the highest risk Grades 7 through 9 kids for two-hour integrated programs? Does this present a problem?

Denise Gottfredson: There is some research that suggests that grouping high risk youths together even for interventions can actually increase problem behaviors, and some of my own research has demonstrated that to be true. The puzzle is that we also have examples such as Program Status that did group high-risk adolescents together yet the program was clearly effective.

What I've concluded from this, and there seems to be evidence supporting this, is that it's okay to group higher risk youths together as long as the program is very structured and very strong so that it would outweigh the effects of any negative reinforcement or deviancy training that might occur. It's mainly when we group high risk youths together in a relatively unstructured setting where they tend to reinforce each other's deviant behavior and make the problem worse.

Q6. How do you implement strategies or programs when they tend to compete with instructional time, and how do we ensure consistent discipline in schools?

Denise Gottfredson: For the second part of the question, if you look at what Program PATHE did, for example, you will see that the program improved consistency of discipline in schools by having a school team that focused directly on that problem. They had many discussions about what the discipline policy should be and then they did a lot of work to get everybody to support that discipline policy. Then they monitored the responses to disciplinary problems in order to make sure that the policy was being consistently enforced.

Regarding the issue about not conflicting with instructional time, that is covered in the next segment of the Webinar.

Q7. You mentioned the instrument or template for rating the adequacy of implementation; is that available for folks?

Denise Gottfredson: Yes, it is. There was really a separate instrument for each of those 14 different types of prevention that I mentioned earlier. I could make all 14 available, but if people want to assess the adequacy of a particular type of program it might be best to email me at gott@umd.edu or email SSSTA@air.org to ask about which type of program you'd like to assess, and then we can make the particular instrument available to you.

Q8. You mentioned in the slide about the most effective implementation of programs was high fidelity or high quality training approaches. How do you integrate that training in the most effective way into the school calendar and schedules?

Denise Gottfredson: I'm sure that there are a lot of different models for providing in-service training and I'm not really familiar with them.

For additional technical assistance, please contact the Safe and Supportive TA Center at sssta@air.org or 1-800-258-8413.

Q9. Where do we find prevention scientists?

Denise Gottfredson: Universities have prevention scientists and one thing you can do is to look at who is doing the research, even just looking through the references at the end the Webinar slides. By reviewing these citations, you can see which scientists are doing prevention research. You can contact them directly if they're in your state or in your region or even if they're not I'm sure that you can call them and tell them what kind of prevention you're interested in and they can point you in the right direction.

Q10. **What effective strategies have you seen used by schools to cast the broad prevention net that you have described?**

Denise Gottfredson: I assume by "broad prevention net" you mean prevention approaches that can be expected to reduce a wide range of problem behaviors. Information shared earlier in the Webinar showed that offending is versatile. The next section of the Webinar covers risk factors that are common to all those different forms of problem behaviors. In other words, these risk factors predict violent behavior as well as property crimes, substance abuse, and so on. The point that I will be trying to make is that it makes most sense to develop prevention strategies that target those risk factors that are common to all those different behaviors and there are lots of different prevention strategies that have been developed with exactly that in mind, that target those early risk factors. In the segment of the Webinar following the risk factor discussion we will review several of those programs.

Q11. **Could the in-school crime rate (as opposed to the out-of-school rate) be contributed to by the fact that schools report more and actually "catch" more of the crime?**

Denise Gottfredson: The data that I showed you are not based on reports by schools; rather, they are based on reports of victimization experiences reported by individuals who are surveyed as part of a household survey. Therefore, the level of in-school crime does not reflect surveillance or reporting practices of the school.

Q12. **Have you seen any research about the presence of police making a difference on a campus?**

Denise Gottfredson: That is a topic that I am hoping to research in the next few years. I'm sure you all know that the presence of police officers in schools has increased rapidly in the last 10 years in response primarily to the school shootings that we experienced in the 90s. The percentage of schools that have police stationed in them has increased dramatically during that period. It used to be 1% back in the 1970s, and now it is more like 40% of schools have police stationed in them. Sadly, the research on the effectiveness of placing police in schools is not really high-quality research. There is some, but the results are inconsistent and we cannot be confident in the conclusions about whether or not police are effective. I'm hoping we will have a much better answer in the next five years or so.

Q13. **Are you considering bullying incidents in any of these that are not serious crimes? So, in some of your charts that you have shown, where does bullying fall?**

Denise Gottfredson: It is possible that some of the victimization reports would be considered instances of bullying. The questions ask youth to report, for example, whether they were "attacked or threatened" at school. A later question specifically asks about instances of bullying, but it is possible that youths might have also reported instances of bullying as victimization experiences.

Q14. Are there specific assessment measures, or lists, that you know of to identify the individual risk factors?

Denise Gottfredson: Yes, there are. Two high quality surveys that measure several individual risk factors are the Communities that Care Youth Survey and the What About You? survey. There are many instruments, and which one you would select would depend upon the age group, reading level, and specific intended purpose.

Q15. Are there any blueprint programs that address violence prevention for high school students?

Denise Gottfredson: The behavioral monitoring program by Brenna Bry, it is listed on the blueprints website under their promising programs. It has one strong study that showed effects for use among older students and we are waiting for replication in order to move it to model program status, that is one example. There is another called Toward No Drug Abuse (TNDA), also on the blueprints website, which is designed for very high-risk high school students.

Q16. The Montreal program that you showed was for three years and it was done starting in first grade it looks like. The next slide showed outcomes at age 12. Did they receive the program for more than three years?

Denise Gottfredson: No, they actually only received the program for one year. In grade 1, and the outcomes at age 12 and age 15 were well after the end of the program. So they show that not only did the program have positive effects right at the end of the program, but those effects were sustained over time.

Q17. Are the instruments or template that you use to rate adequacy of implementation available?

Denise Gottfredson: Please see response to question # 7.