DOES DIFFERENTIAL PLACEMENT HISTORY PREDICT OUTCOMES AMONG SERIOUS JUVENILE OFFENDERS?

Research shows that a small percentage of chronically delinquent youth is responsible for the majority of crime, with age at first offense and severity of juvenile offending directly linked to adult outcome. Delinquent youth will spend time in various types of placement treatment centers during their time in the juvenile justice system; each placement varies in level of treatment and structure provided, and in effectiveness. If placements do not significantly impact recidivism levels during adolescence, the projected cost of treating, rehabilitating, and incarcerating these serious delinquents is extremely high. The present study examines whether severity of youth offenses, differences in ethnicity (Caucasian vs. Latino), and time spent in different types of placements (Detention, Proctor Home, Group Home, Intensive Group Home, or Secure Care) predict occurrence and severity of criminal activity as an adult. Results show that severity of juvenile delinquency predicted severity of adult criminal charges, Latino participants had more severe adult criminal outcomes than Caucasian participants, and more time spent in juvenile detention facilities predicted poorer adult outcomes. Future research is needed to identify, develop, and implement programs that are successful in rehabilitating chronic youth offenders early in their careers. The experience of detention must be changed, and contributing causal factors in ethnic disparity of adult outcome must be identified.