

Treating the Juvenile Offender

Edited by Robert D. Hoge, PhD, Nancy G. Guerra, EdD, and Paul Boxer, PhD. New York: The Guilford Press, 2008. 294 pp. \$35.00.

Reviewed by M. Jerome Fialkov, MD

Delinquency is a sociolegal concept that is familiar to clinicians who work with adolescents. Juvenile offenses include unlawful behavior as well as conduct that is not considered illegal for adults: for example, truancy, habitual disobedience, and running away from home. Juvenile court judges dispose of cases in a myriad of ways that offer each youth some degree of rehabilitation. Dispositions include, but are not limited to: dismissal, restitution, probation, psychiatric hospitalization, foster care, and secure residential placement. *Treating the Juvenile Offender* describes what happens when juvenile offenders are remanded to these arrangements.

The book, which is edited by three notable educator-researchers, contains contributions from 20 scholars who work in the juvenile justice field. Each author explores rehabilitative options for youths in an attempt to ascertain which program works for whom, under what circumstances, and in what manner.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I, "Understanding Youthful Offending," addresses the epidemiology of youthful offending in the United States, contemporary models of offending, and how assessments can facilitate an understanding of individual risk and treatment needs.

The second part of the book, entitled "Treatment Programs and Policies for the General Offender Population," accomplishes several tasks. The authors review findings from controlled studies of rehabilitative interventions for juveniles; discuss the need for a balance between evidence-based programs and evidence-based principles; examine obstacles to effective implementation of treatment programs in the community and juvenile facilities; and explore challenges specifically related to policies and practices within the juvenile justice system.

The age at which juveniles are incarcerated with adults is used to illustrate the extent to which program policies and practices vary by state and across thousands of local jurisdictions. The authors describe the *Farrell v. Allen*¹ lawsuit in which the State of California entered into a consent decree to address rehabilitative deficiencies in state corrections facilities for youth and adults. This case is an example of the positive changes that can

be achieved if all parties agree to adopt recommendations by experts without assuming adversarial positions.

In Part III, "Treatment Programs and Policies for Specific Offender Groups," the focus is on violent offenders; gang members; sex offenders; female offenders; and youth with mental health, substance abuse, educational, and learning problems. A developmental pathways model is used to describe a sample of serious and persistent offenders who generally have callous and unemotional interpersonal styles. These youths, who lack remorse and empathy, are more likely to engage in severe delinquent behavior and to show earlier and more persistent patterns of offending. The authors recommend interventions early in childhood to interrupt the inevitable development of this ominous character type.

Also examined are the rehabilitative needs of youth with mental health problems, including substance use. Many offenders who have had traumatic experiences need treatment so that they can halt the cycle of violence.

In a chapter that addresses education programs for delinquent youth, the authors note that the risk of serious offending is increased in youth with educational disabilities. Such youths can have limited employment prospects. Employment training, the authors explain, has a greater impact on reducing future delinquency than any other intervention.

In this book, the authors emphasize that treatment should be closer to home, rehabilitative, evidence-based, risk-focused, and strengths-based. They correctly identify barriers to accomplishing that goal, including limited financial resources, the public's fear of crime, and a tendency for some politicians and policy-makers to advocate punitive crime control strategies.

Mental health practitioners working in the juvenile justice system have an important role to play in advocating for a therapeutic approach to juvenile justice rehabilitation. Attaining this goal is an uphill task, based on personal experience, but it is well worth the effort.

Reference

1. *Farrell v. Allen* (Cal. Sup. Ct. 2004) <http://www.prisonlaw.com/pdfs/farrellcd.pdf>. Accessed October 6, 2009

Criminal Behavior

By Elaine Cassel and Douglas A. Bernstein. 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2007. 386 pp. \$75.00.

Reviewed by Edward Poa, MD

The second edition of *Criminal Behavior* is an update of the original collaboration between Elaine Cassel