Conflict as Opportunity: Library Restorative Practices for Youth (LRPY)

May 22, 2018
Public Library Association Webinar
Library Restorative Practices for Youth Team is...

A diverse group of library staff and community partners
History and Motivation
What We Know About Youth

- Prefrontal cortex is not fully developed (26 yrs)
- Risk taking is part of human development
- Youth of color and low income youth are disproportionately surveilled and disciplined in institutional settings
- Youth lack societal power and agency
- Youth lack opportunities to self advocate/for voice
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Methods</th>
<th>Restorative Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Code of Conduct is broken</td>
<td>People and relationships are harmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice focuses on establishing guilt</td>
<td>Justice identifies needs and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability = Punishment</td>
<td>Accountability = understanding impact and repairing harm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuum of Restorative Practices

informal

- active listening
- open-ended questions
- small impromptu gathering

formal

- mediation circle
- formal community board

Active Listening

Wherever you are on the Restorative Practices continuum, active listening is an essential tool.
Open Ended Questions

• What happened here?
• Why do you think this happened?
• How could you have made this situation better?
• Who do you think was impacted by your actions?
Small, impromptu gatherings…

- take place in the moment with little or no planning
- address concerns immediately
- offer a private setting to discuss incident
- are conducted by staff on hand
Five Universal Truths of Human Interaction

1. People want to be treated with dignity and respect.
2. People want to be asked rather than being told to do something.
3. People want to be told why they are being asked to do something.
4. People want to be given options rather than threats.
5. People want a second chance when they make a mistake.

George J. Thompson III, Ph.D., Verbal Judo
Implementation

- Partner with key community organizations
- Train staff
- Establish protocol
- Incorporate community input
- Provide training and support materials for LRPY Board
- Evaluate and adjust as needed
Progress

One of the things that’s going really well is that when we talk to the youth at our meetings we usually get them to verbally contract with us to follow through on something that will help them reach their goals. We ask them to make a promise to us that they will go to Homework Help at least once a week or we ask them to make a commitment to asking library staff for help when they feel frustrated or angry. I think this is very important as a way for the youth to integrate what we’ve covered in our meetings.

Sofia Blue, LRPY Board Member
Staff Assistant to Hon. Ramón Valadez
Board of Supervisors, District 2
130 West Congress, 11th Floor
Tucson, Arizona 85701
520-724-8492
Positive Outcomes

• Better relationships between youth and staff

• Improved youth behavior

• Fewer youth suspensions

• Increased communication with parents or guardians

• Stronger community connections
## Incident and Suspension Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
<th>Suspensions</th>
<th>LRPY Referrals</th>
<th>LRPY participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan-July 2017</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug-Dec 2017</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Reduction in Incidents

## YOUTH INCIDENTS (January – December 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incidents</th>
<th>Suspensions</th>
<th>LRPY Referrals</th>
<th>LRPY Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017:January</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017:February</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017:March</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017:April</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2017:May</td>
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<td>2017:June</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017:July</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017:August</td>
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<td>2017:September</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
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Reluctant Staff..

- Both approaches take time.
- Restorative practices is re-delegating your time to have a more positive, long-term impact on youth in your system.
- It is not a quick fix, but rather than spending time on discipline, you are investing in helping them learn life skills.

“I was a huge skeptic in the beginning, but saw firsthand how the LRPY meetings have changed the behaviors of the children as well as their ability to handle tough situations.” Lori Johnston, Library Staff
“Human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.”
(Ted Wachtel, 2005).

International Institute for Restorative Practices

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