



Building a Partnership for Research with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth

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Why Is a Partnership Between Researchers and Practitioners So Important?

Developing a partnership between researchers and practitioners is vital for many reasons. Practitioners can help to identify research needs and may have the best knowledge of the research participants. Working with partners can create a more integrated and transparent approach to applying knowledge that results from research. ⁽¹⁾ In addition to expanding the knowledge base for suicide prevention, participating in research is critical for academics to have successful careers, especially for academics working with vulnerable populations.



Youth involved in the juvenile justice system comprise a particularly vulnerable population based on their age and because of their system involvement. ⁽²⁾ It is challenging to research such populations in an ethical and constructive manner, and research-practice partnerships are essential to address some of these challenges. ⁽³⁾ Consequently, one important aspect of research with youth involved in the juvenile justice system is the researcher's ability to form partnerships by developing projects and research questions that are important to prospective partners.

How Does a Researcher Get Started in Developing a Partnership?

A few simple steps can be followed to build those partnerships. First identifying key people early on in the research planning phase, and throughout the process, enhances the researcher's ability to think about the nuances of the study and how best to convey them in a research proposal. Then, once the

researcher has made meaningful contact with their potential partner, it is important to schedule a phone call or face-to-face meeting to hear their concerns, needs, and issues. The researcher should listen intently for the details that are related to their areas of expertise and interest to get a solid grasp on what's important to the partner(s). Next, the researcher should share the areas of synergy noted in that phone call or meeting and ask about the next step. The next meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss more details and/or include other key stakeholders. Sending written follow up notes to the partner and remaining in regular contact help strengthen the partnership.

Building a Partnership with the Ohio Department of Youth Services

My experience with my current partner, the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS), serves as a good example. Prior to accepting my faculty appointment at The Ohio State University (OSU), College of Social Work (CSW), I asked the Dean for contacts in local organizations that serve youth involved in the juvenile justice system. This led to a series of e-mail messages from CSW staff connecting me to OSU alumni, who in turn, connected me to two government contacts at ODYS. We then had several phone conversations that included another ODYS representative.

During the first call, I asked ODYS staff to share their concerns and issues to see how I could be useful to them. After I accepted the faculty appointment at OSU, I went to Columbus, Ohio and during that visit, the Dean and I had a face-to-face meeting with ODYS representatives.

Initially, I shared my interest in pilot testing an intervention with youth in corrections. Together, my ODYS partners Mr. Larome Myrick and Dr. Bob Stinson, developed an application for and attended the 2016 ICRC-S Research Training Institute at the University of Rochester, where we were able to refine our research project. Spending this week together with other researchers from across the country and experienced research faculty was a wonderful way for me to get to know my ODYS partners and enhance our research ideas. As a team, we worked hard to develop our research project focusing on non-suicidal self-injury of youth in corrections by understanding sub-scales of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument version 2 (MAYSI-2), as well as the role of correctional services. In August, 2016, we presented our project and training experience to ODYS leadership, and now that the project has been approved, our application is being reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Through each step of the process, I have been able to work closely with Larome and Bob to understand the unique aspects of work with youth in corrections. I feel so fortunate to have made this connection and subsequent partnership. Ultimately, taking the time to build an effective research-practice partnership is the best path to meaningful research that will serve youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

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References

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3. Quinn, C. R. (2015). General considerations for research with vulnerable populations: ten lessons for success. *Health & Justice*, 3(1), 1.

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