



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

Media Release

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For immediate release

Attention: Health, Justice, Education Reporters

Youth Crime Needs a Qualified Workforce and an Evidence-Based Approach

The New Zealand Psychological Society is concerned that the Government is planning a sentencing option of sending youth offenders to military-style boot camps. The Society calls on the Government to view youth crime through a broader lens and support evidence-based approaches which encompass prevention, rehabilitation and restorative justice. This will involve a serious and dedicated approach to workforce planning so that at risk children, youth and their families receive the care and support they need as early as possible.

Jack Austin, President of the Society, said today that “interventions which focus on the individual are much less likely to be effective than interventions that also focus on the family, involve the school and community resources.

We need to make good use of those who have specialist training in child and adolescent psychology if we are to assist at risk children and youth he said. Educational psychologists trained in this area provide services for youth offenders, support for schools and early parenting support for parents who have at risk preschoolers. Psychologists in justice and health settings also work with

youth offenders. What is extremely concerning he said is that the number of educational psychologists is in decline and there is also a shortage of clinical psychologists”.

As well as planning for and developing the workforce dealing with youth crime, the Society calls on the Government to build on work already being done rather than putting scarce public funds into boot camps. The pilot therapeutic, residential, educational and cultural programme *Te Hurihanga* is an evidence-based programme for recidivist young males at high risk of reoffending. More programmes like this and the “Incredible Years-Parent Management Programme” need to be developed, evaluated and funded.

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Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society

The New Zealand Psychological Society is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 1000 members and subscribers and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology.

See www.psychology.org.nz for more information about the Society.

Evidence-based information, on managing at risk children and youth

See Henggeler, S. W., & Shoenwald, S. K. (1994). Boot camps for juvenile offenders: Just say no. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 3, 243-248.

Reid, J.B., Patterson, G.R., & Snyder, J. (2002). *Antisocial Behaviour in Children and Adolescents: A Developmental Analysis and Model for Intervention*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Contact

Associate Professor Neville Blampied
Director Scientific Affairs
New Zealand Psychological Society