Improving law enforcement / youth interactions in times of crisis

Note: All attendees have been muted. To submit questions, please use the chat feature in GoToMeeting.

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Strategies for Youth

A national, nonprofit policy and training organization dedicated to improving police/youth interactions and reducing disproportionate minority contact.

Policing Kids is Hard!
Juveniles' developmental characteristics include impulsivity, self-centeredness, and resistance to authority…

Construction Ahead

Notice: Judgment is last to develop!

Judgment
Emotion
Motivation
Physical coordination
Prefrontal Cortex
Amygdala
Nucleus Accumbens
Cerebellum

% scoring at mean adult level

10-11 12-13 14-15 16-17 18-21 22-25 26-30

Intelectual Ability
Psychosocial Maturity

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Adolescent Brain: Emotions Drive Processing

By about age 15, most kids have the capacity to think in adult-like ways.

And yet their behaviors are so often immature and emotion-driven.

Rational Response
- Thinks before acting
- Learns from mistakes
- Anticipates problems
- Uses will power

Adolescent Response
- Impulsive
- Self-defeating
- No will power
- Follows peer group
So what can you expect?

- Calls reflecting parents’ anxiety, frustration, and trauma
- Calls reflecting youth reactions to the trauma of living through a pandemic
- Calls reflecting parents’ lack of resources
- Calls based on parents’ and youths’ fears

What makes us anxious?

Anxiety = Uncertainty x Powerlessness
Social isolation = Pressure Cooker!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>DV Calls / Arrests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>+35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>+21%</td>
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</tbody>
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Disproportionate Minority Impact

While not all states report race data for COVID-19, Illinois and Michigan report that while African Americans make up ~14% of the population, 30% of confirmed cases affect this group.

Defining Trauma

- an often serious and body-altering physical injury, such as the removal of a limb
- an emotional or psychological injury, usually resulting from an extremely stressful or life-threatening situation
Impact on Young Psyches...

- Hyper-vigilant
- Anticipate harm
- Hyperactive
- Unemotional
- Intrusive thoughts
- Inability to forget

Impact on Law Enforcement

- Concern
  - For yourselves
  - For your family
  - For your peers
- Frustration
  - With the system
  - With the public

Mental health
Adolescent Mental Illness

Approximately 1 in 5 youth has a mental health disorder

About 3/4 of kids in the juvenile justice system have a mental health disorder

So what should you do?

Best Practices

What do Youth Want?

- Voice
- Neutrality
- Respect
- Care
- Proportionality
- Not Predatory
#1. Assume TRAUMA

- Acknowledge and validate the impact of the situation
- Be a calming influence
- Reassure all parties
- It is never wrong to assume trauma!

#2. Be a MEDIATOR

- Goal = reduce conflict
- Talk to each person separately to identify and validate feelings
- Find out individuals’ goals, “what can you live with?”
- Then bring them together to find a solution

#3. Address ANXIETY

- Acknowledge and validate
- Recognize that loss of control leads to efforts to get more control
- Recognize that parents may not know how to talk about the pandemic
#4. Help them DEVELOP A PLAN

- Agree on specific & measurable steps for the solution.
- Create escape valves
- Identify and plan for the re-emergence of problems
- Schedule “check-ins”

In summary…

- This is a difficult time for everyone
- Youth are at an emotional disadvantage
- The role of police has to expand

- Acknowledge / Mediate / Plan

Questions?

Strategies for Youth is a policy and training organization dedicated to improving police/youth interactions through community engagement, police training & outreach programs for youth.

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