

## Functional Family Therapy (FFT) for post-release youth convicted of a sex offense Juvenile Justice

Literature review updated July 2019.

As part of WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies, WSIPP determines "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using an approach called meta-analysis. For detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#). At this time, WSIPP has not yet calculated benefits and costs for this topic.

**Program Description:** This analysis compares Functional Family Therapy (FFT) to treatment as usual for youth released from juvenile rehabilitation facilities who have committed sexual offenses. FFT is a structured family-based intervention that uses a multi-step approach to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors in the family. The five major components of FFT include 1) engagement, 2) motivation, 3) identifying patterns of interaction within the family, 4) behavior change, and 5) generalizing positive interactions to new situations. FFT sessions are conducted primarily in the home of the participant's family. FFT was not modified or adapted to address the specific needs of youth who have committed sexual offenses.

All participants were youth convicted of sex offenses being released from juvenile rehabilitation facilities after serving their sentence. FFT participants received 12-16 therapy sessions over 11 months, on average. Youth in the comparison group received treatment as usual for juvenile sex offenders (TAU-JSO), which consisted of weekly or bi-weekly individual and/or group therapy sessions over 22 months. In the included study, 28% of participants were youth of color and 3% were female. Youth were classified as low or moderate risk per scores on a validated recidivism risk instrument.

Evaluations of FFT for court-involved and post-release youth convicted of non-sexual offenses are excluded from this analysis and analyzed separately.

### Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect size and standard error			Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
			ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Crime	1	41	0.588	0.394	16	0.588	0.136
Sex offense	1	41	0.000	0.383	16	0.000	1.000

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

## Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

Erickson, C.J. (2008). The effectiveness of functional family therapy in the treatment of juvenile sexual offenders. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69-10 (B), 6409, 208.

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