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Restorative Practices Produces Dramatic Reduction in Offending Among Delinquent and At-Risk Youth, New Research Shows

The latest results from an ongoing research evaluation have shown that average offending rates are lowered by more than half among delinquent and at-risk youth discharged from programs employing restorative practices, when compared with rates among these youth prior to attending the programs.

The restorative programs of Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy (CSF Buxmont) include eight schools and sixteen group homes, as well as in-home services, in eastern Pennsylvania. Restorative practices is an approach that holds people accountable while actively engaging them in problem-solving.

CSF Buxmont founder Ted Wachtel, also founder and president of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), a graduate school and training and consulting organization, and co-author of the bestselling book *Toughlove*, noted that this research has implications beyond delinquent and at-risk youth: "Restorative practices, in use in schools, social service, criminal justice and workplace settings worldwide, has been shown to be highly effective not only in reducing offending, but in resolving conflicts and building and restoring a sense of community."

The latest phase of the study tracked 2,151 youths discharged from CSF Buxmont programs during the three school years ending August 2004, 2005 and 2006, with a comprehensive search analyzing juvenile and adult court records for 3, 6 and 12 months after discharge. Data showed that average offending rates decreased by more than half, compared with offending rates prior to youths' involvement with restorative practices and CSF Buxmont.

After accounting for differences in age at first offending, number of prior offenses, gender and race, the effect of restorative practices program participation was still statistically significant. This phase of the ongoing study, performed by Dr. Paul McCold, founding faculty member of the IIRP and former researcher for the New York State Division for Youth, and researcher Ansik Chang, confirmed the results of two previous reports published in 2002 and 2004.

Said CSF executive director Craig Adamson: "It's very encouraging to see research that confirms what we know to be true about restorative practices: that it really works to help challenging youth turn their lives around." CSF Buxmont has been operating programs for delinquent and at-risk youth in eastern Pennsylvania since 1977.

The new study can be found at:

http://www.iirp.org/pdf/CSF_2007.pdf

The two previous studies can be found at:

<http://www.realjustice.org/library/erm.html>

<http://www.realjustice.org/library/erm2.html>

CSF Buxmont: <http://www.csfbuxmont.org>

IIRP: <http://www.iirp.org>