



**ARISE Foundation Focus Groups
at Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities
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On June 20, 2007 and July 25, 2007 focus groups were conducted at a sample of Florida Department of Juvenile Justice facilities to get specific feedback about ARISE and their use of the program. Three different facilities were questioned about the ARISE program. At each facility both the professional staff teaching the lessons, as well as the youth using the lessons were interviewed. The following includes specifics about each organization and their responses on a variety of questions.

List of Facilities:

Dade Marine Institute North: This low-risk facility enrolls a maximum of 45 juvenile offenders. It is a non-residential educational facility for grade 6-12. Youth attend school after being released from detention or rehabilitation centers. There is currently one Certified ARISE Life-Skills Instructor and another employee teaching ARISE life-skills lessons with the youth on a daily basis. Their mission is to redirect troubled youth and create productive citizens.

Dade Marine Institute
2701 N.E. 151st Street
North Miami Beach, FL 33160-4619
Participant since: April 2002

Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center: This is a facility that holds juvenile offenders until the legal system determines where they should be placed. The facility holds 300 youth at a time. The ARISE Life-skill lessons are taught by the educators that work in the school at the detention center. The lessons are taught to first-time offenders and incorporated into standard school lessons. The instructors work to get the youth motivated about life, learning, school, and doing the right thing. As well as develop long and short term goals.

Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center
3300 N.W. 27th Avenue, Room 1207
Miami, FL 33142-5729
305-638-5054
Participant since: November 1999

Palm Beach Juvenile Correction Center: This is a maximum risk facility that works to rehabilitate youth. The facility holds up to 80 youth. The ARISE Life-skill lessons are taught by the correctional officers at the facility that have completed the ARISE Life-skills Instructor Training. The lessons are taught to all the youth in the facility multiple times a week. The role of the correctional officer is to help the youth identify their behavior problems and know how to make better choices.

Palm Beach Juvenile Correction Center
9680 Fairgrounds Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33411-3528
561-333-0664
Participant since: September 2006

Avon Park Youth Academy: This is a moderate risk facility. The program lasts a minimum of 9 months and the facility holds a maximum of 200 youth. This program emphasizes the learning of a trades, such as electrical, facility management, landscaping, or culinary arts. They were currently working on the Self-esteem Series.

Avon Park Youth Academy
242 South Blvd.
Avon Park, FL 33825
863-452-3815
Participant since: August 2002

Focus Groups Summary:

It is highly recommended that the facilities receive the Networking, Jobs, and Money curriculum when funding returns. These are books the most of the youth in the facilities have not been exposed to. However, the youth are most concerned with these issues when they leave their current facilities.

The focus groups reveal that the ARISE program is a valuable asset to those facilities participating. Staff and youth seem to value and appreciate the program and convey that the lessons are changing the youth in a positive way. The ARISE program is an intricate part of fulfilling the mission at each facility, even though those missions vary. The youth and staff had a variety of things they liked about ARISE.

Staff were very pleased with the composition of the ARISE lessons stating that they were flexible and the topics were “real” and the youth easily related to them. They also gave nothing but positive feedback about the ARISE training. They all viewed it favorably and felt well prepared to teach the lessons. Staff expressed, at times, that teaching the life skills had increased their job satisfaction and improved their home lives for a variety of reasons.

Youth seem to maintain the lessons they have learned and listed a variety of lessons as their favorites. The youth in all the facilities commented on the usefulness of the *Networking, Jobs and Money* curriculum, which match their concerns about making money and finding jobs when they are released. With most of the youth, discussion and role playing were listed as favorite activities. On the whole, the youth and staff both appreciate and enjoy the interactive, engaging activities. Most felt that lessons would be good for family and friends. Most of the youth seem to value and understand the importance of life-skills in their lives and think they will share some of what they have learned with others.

Program: Dade Marine Institute
Date: June 20, 2007 @ 9:00AM
Youth: 4 teenage males and 1 teenage female
length of enrollment at facility ranged from 4-8 months
Staff: 1 female officer; teaching the lessons since February 2007.

Youth Questions:

What do you like most about the ARISE program?

- Teaches you to control anger
- Helps us set goals (both long and short term)
- Skills we need in life
- Changing negative attitudes to positive ones

Which ARISE lesson will help you most when you leave the facility?

- Anger management
- Resume writing
- All of them

What lesson or activity did you enjoy the most?

- Credit cards/money management
- Releasing anger
- Better than regular class

What type of activity did you enjoy most (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Group discussions because you get to express what is on your mind
- Writing rap songs

What do you wish you had known before you came to this facility?

- Just learning what life skills are now

Why do you think that learning life skills are important?

- Need them in life
- Part of everyday life that they need to know when they are out there

When released, will you share what you have learned in the ARISE groups with your family and friends?

- Would share anger management
- When they see the need for help others and can tell them about ARISE lessons, they will

What is the one thing you are concerned about when you leave this facility?

- Getting a job
- Going to school
- Controlling my anger
- Not getting arrested again

What do you need to help keep you from joining a gang or getting into trouble?

- A set of goals
- Good friends
- Keep to yourself to stay away from negative pressures

**Youth commented that they wanted sex education

Staff Questions:

What do you like about the ARISE lessons?

- straight forward
- on a good reading level
- easily understandable
- easy to follow the steps in the manual
- well organized

What do you find most challenging about the ARISE groups?

- Unable to work with youth in smaller groups or one on one; 12-15 per group

Do you see a difference in your program from before you had ARISE?

- Not applicable; ARISE was in place before taking the job

Did the ARISE lessons have an effect on conflict and anger management? Please explain.

- Youth refer to anger management when they are angry
- Older students impacted more so

How well do you feel the ARISE training prepared you to teach? Is there anything different that ARISE should do in training?

- Not applicable

What topics do the youth respond most to?

- Resume writing
- Money management

What types of activities do the youth respond most to (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Group discussions

Which do they like least?

- Writing; some are lazy and some can't do it well (afraid of not being perfect; must stress that it doesn't matter)

How has the relationship between the youth changed since you have been utilizing the ARISE program?

- Not applicable

How has ARISE improved your life at work? Have you been able to apply any of the lessons you are teaching to your own work here? How so?

- Review for self; teaching it and doing it
- Especially the networking tips; things I did not know or forgot

How satisfied are you in your job? Have the skills you have learned through ARISE increased your job satisfaction? How so?

- Done for you, so it helps in the job
- Less work to do; know what to do with the kids

How has ARISE improved your life at home? Do you use any of the lessons you are teaching in your life outside work? How so?

- Makes you reiterate to self how you should act and what you should do, both here with co-workers and at home

Program: Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center
Date: June 20, 2007 @ 11:00AM
Youth: 5 teenage males (ages 15-17 years)
Length of stay at facility ranged from 2-3 months
Staff: 1 female social studies teacher & 1 male science teacher

Youth Questions:

What do you like most about the ARISE program?

- Helps us

Which ARISE lesson will help you most when you leave the facility?

- Anger management
- Prioritizing
- How to talk to authority
- All of them are helpful

What lesson or activity did you enjoy the most?

- Taneka's Tales

What type of activity did you enjoy most (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Drawing activities

What do you wish you had known before you came to this facility?

- More discipline
- Respect for others

Why do you think that learning life skills are important?

- Yes, you need it for basic life.
- Will need it later on in life
- Necessities of life
- “Can’t just be talking ghetto with people.”

When released, will you share what you have learned in the ARISE groups with your family and friends?

- Yes- some of them
- Some said no they don’t share that kind of stuff

What is the one thing you are concerned about when you leave this facility?

- Coming back
- Getting caught

What do you need to help keep you from joining a gang or getting into trouble?

- Something to keep you occupied (hobby, reading, sports, girlfriend)
- Going to school and church
- Job (having one)

Staff Questions:

What do you like about the ARISE lessons?

- It is real.
- They enjoy it and participate.
- They can relate to it; it’s familiar to them and down to earth.
- The correctional officers participate too (lessons taught by educators not officers).
- It helps them make good choices.
- Teaches them new things; often think they already know about a topic (like STDs), but they find they really don’t.

What do you find most challenging about the ARISE groups?

- Sometimes they know more than the teachers, especially about street life, slang, etc.

Do you see a difference in your program from before you had ARISE?

- Not applicable

Did the ARISE lessons have an effect on conflict and anger management? Please explain.

- The officers are present during class, so there is not a lot of conflict during lessons.
- Hard to tell; sometimes you think they are not paying attention and that the material is not reaching them; but every once in a while you realize that it does; that you have planted a seed
- One teacher told a story of a youth that seemed like he was not paying attention at all; later came back (after release) and told her how he had opened a bank account which was a part of the money management lessons, so you never know when you are reaching them

How well do you feel the ARISE training prepared you to teach? Is there anything different that ARISE should do in training?

- It did prepare us.
- The instructor's manuals help too and get you to refocus and center on the material.
- Could think of nothing to change

What topics do the youth respond most to?

- Violence/conflict
- Sprouts curriculum is only so-so with them.
- They like Taneka's Tales
- Some of the boys seem to like the fatherhood materials
- Teachers like everything

What types of activities do the youth respond most to (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Drawing
- Role playing
- Writing for the girls (like to express themselves this way more)
- Discussion/debate

Which do they like least?

- Not resistant to any lessons

How has the relationship between the youth changed since you have been utilizing the ARISE program?

- Not applicable

How has ARISE improved your life at work? Have you been able to apply any of the lessons you are teaching to your own work here? How so?

- Helps the teachers listen to them
- Helps teacher relate to them, otherwise have no opportunity to know what their lives are like

How satisfied are you in your job? Have the skills you have learned through ARISE increased your job satisfaction? How so?

- Yes, it does because instructors can relate to the youth better

How has ARISE improved your life at home? Do you use any of the lessons you are teaching in your life outside work? How so?

- Not really; things are not new, but reviewing them

Program: Palm Beach Juvenile Correction Center
Date: June 20, 2007 @ 3:30PM
Youth: 4 males (two were 18 years old & 2 were 16 years old)
Length of stay at facility ranged from 6-10 months
Staff: 3 staff members (1 male and 2 females; all have been through life-skills and CHOICES training)

Youth Questions:

What do you like most about the ARISE program?

- Teaches useful things
- It will help some of us, but not everyone wants to learn.

Which ARISE lesson will help you most when you leave the facility?

- If you want to apply them, they can help you a lot.
- Interviewing
- Resumes
- Substance abuse

What lesson or activity did you enjoy the most?

- Lessons about money

What type of activity did you enjoy most (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Group discussion
- Role playing

What do you wish you had known before you came to this facility?

- If they knew what correctional facilities were like, it would have kept them from getting there.

Why do you think that learning life skills are important?

- It can help you if you don't already know it and want to take it in.

When released, will you share what you have learned in the ARISE groups with your family and friends?

- Will probably share all of it
- Anger management
- Will just use it for self

What is the one thing you are concerned about when you leave this facility?

- Making money
- Jobs

What do you need to help keep you from joining a gang or getting into trouble?

- Fill up free time with sports and jobs

Staff Questions:

What do you like about the ARISE lessons?

- The lessons are created in a such a way they are "what you make of it"; can make it fun
- Approach all aspects of life

What do you find most challenging about the ARISE groups?

- Some don't have the reading skills and have to have it read to them
- Need to repeat topics with them so they get it, not move on to new ones

Do you see a difference in your program from before you had ARISE?

- Those that want to change, take it in; do consider before they act

Did the ARISE lessons have an effect on conflict and anger management? Please explain.

- It helps for some of them; but many try to play the hard role for a while

How well do you feel the ARISE training prepared you to teach? Is there anything different that ARISE should do in training?

- Felt very prepared
- Could think of nothing to change

What topics do the youth respond most to?

- Doesn't notice any one lesson that they consistently respond to

What types of activities do the youth respond most to (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Role playing; especially when they get to role play as staff
- Rapping

Which do they like least?

- Writing

How has the relationship between the youth changed since you have been utilizing the ARISE program?

- They get to see the staff as people and see that the staff can put themselves (or have been) in their shoes. Get to share about their own hardships and how they have made mistakes and have ended up as productive citizens.

How has ARISE improved your life at work? Have you been able to apply any of the lessons you are teaching to your own work here? How so?

- Work load is a little harder because of the program, but they like teaching them and working with the youth in this capacity

How satisfied are you in your job? Have the skills you have learned through ARISE increased your job satisfaction? How so?

- No

How has ARISE improved your life at home? Do you use any of the lessons you are teaching in your life outside work? How so?

- Yes, the lessons come to mind at home
- Often tell others about what they have learned (on a daily basis)
- CHOICES Training especially useful

Program: Avon Park Youth Academy
Date: July 25, 2007
Youth: 5 males (3-age 18, 2-age 17)
length of stay at facility ranged from 4-11 months
Staff: 12 staff members (they were participants in the CHOICES training, but none taught life-skill lessons so that portion of the focus group was not conducted)

Youth Questions:

What do you like most about the ARISE program?

- The lessons are easy
- Would be doing nothing
- More organized

Which ARISE lesson will help you most when you leave the facility?

- Controlling anger
- Social life skills
- Better self-esteem; change they way you think about yourself

What lesson or activity did you enjoy the most?

- Draw a picture or comic of a face when angry

What type of activity did you enjoy most (role playing, group discussion, etc.)?

- Group discussion; ARISE discussions better than other groups

What do you wish you had known before you came to this facility?

- Think ahead
- Don't mess with the police
- Make better choices; all about choices

Why do you think that learning life skills are important?

- Help you go through life
- Help you deal with life
- Deal with racism

When released, will you share what you have learned in the ARISE groups with your family and friends?

- Anger management

What is the one thing you are concerned about when you leave this facility?

- Making money
- Going back to work
- Getting and keeping a job
- Transportation to work
- Not committing a crime
- Going to college

What do you need to help keep you from joining a gang or getting into trouble?

- Support from family and friends (to be around and give positive options)
- The right mindset
- Avoid gang members (hard when family members are in gangs)
- Show people what happens to people in gangs (jail, death)