

**Research Digest:  
Adolescent Risk-Taking Behaviors and Outcomes**

**Larzelere, R. E.,** Daly, D. L., Davis, J. L., Chmelka, M. B., Handwerk, M. L. (2004).  
Outcome evaluation of Girls and Boys Town's Family Home Program. *Education  
and Treatment of Children, 27*, 130-149.

The Teaching Family Model (TFM) has been one of the most effective treatment programs for juvenile delinquents. However, due to pervasive criticism of group home programs, some evidence indicates that the TFM may be counterproductive due to grouping of youth with behavior problems and reinforcing behaviors that decrease intrinsic motivation. In addition, studies have rarely investigated the effects of TFM on girls. This research aims to broaden the scope of currently contradictory messages about the competence of TFM-based group homes.

Girls and Boys Town implements the Family Home Program (FHP), which emphasizes positive relationships between the staff and youth, well structured programs for developing proper social skills, use of peers to support treatment goals, self-determination, moral and spiritual promotion, and character education. More importantly, its treatment plan is implemented in a natural and family-style atmosphere. The main objective of this study was to “conduct a systematic evaluation of the contemporary Family Home Program version of the Teaching Family Model (p.134).”

Four hundred forty discharged youths from Girls and Boys Town were measured on both standardized and non-standardized outcomes including restrictiveness of youth's subsequent treatment setting, improvement from intake to discharge, departure success, percentage of problems improved, and follow-up functioning. The results found that the youth improved on all outcome variables. Girls improved more than boys in reducing the restrictiveness of their setting.

Overall, this research suggests the Family Home Program is an effective treatment for delinquent youth, both girls and boys. Future research is needed to assess longer post-treatment outcomes comparing TFM-based programs with alternative programs for youth who are at-risk.