

# HIGH RISK YOUNG DRIVERS AND YOUNG OFFENDERS

## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

A small number of young people are more likely than others to take overt risks while driving. Many of these young people also seem to take risks in many other areas of their lives. A number of Government and Community programs are available which aim to prevent young offenders from re-offending. Evidence about what works and what doesn't for young offenders indicates that some approaches are more likely to be effective than others.

### What is more likely to work?

While there is not a great deal of research about what is effective for young traffic offenders, there are some clear findings from both the juvenile justice and the road safety fields to provide direction.

#### Programs delivered by experts

- ✓ Effective programs need to be **delivered by professionals** with training and expertise in delivering programs for offender groups. Community road safety groups should not be involved in the delivery of these programs.

#### Prevention

- ✓ Comprehensive **social competency skills programs**, delivered by professionals, that focus on developing self-control, stress-management, responsible decision-making, social problem-solving, and communication skills and that are delivered over a long period of time have been found to be effective at preventing high risk young people from engaging in illegal behaviours
- ✓ **Mentoring** program, delivered by professionals, for high-risk youth has a modest positive effect on a range of anti-social behaviours, in particular for delinquency and aggression.

### Diversion

- ✓ Evidence-based **family-interventions and behavioural programs**, delivered by professionals, in addition to case management can be effective diversionary programs.
- ✓ The Victorian **Youth Justice Conferencing** Program has been shown to reduce later re-offending. This program involves the young offender, their family or support networks, their legal representative, a police officer, and a convenor having a conference with the people who have been affected by their offending. This intervention aims to address the issues that contribute to the young person's offending behaviour and to divert the young person from more intensive supervisory outcomes.

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### Treatment programs

- ✓ **License suspension/revocation** for adult driving offenders is by far the most effective measure in reducing both crashes and violations.
- ✓ **Motivational interviewing** which is a form of counselling has a strong research base to support its efficacy and has been shown to be effective in reducing re-offending and dangerous driving among young crash involved patients presenting at hospitals.
- ✓ **Cognitive-behavioural interventions** have been established as key ingredients for successful interventions with juvenile offenders.
- ✓ **Family therapy approaches** have been very effective. The nature of these approaches focus on improving interactions between family members, enhance emotional connections and improve family problem solving. They also assist parents in providing structure, guidance and limits for their children.

### Approaches that should be avoided

- ✗ Sending young driving offenders to driving skills programs
- ✗ Fear appeals, like trauma ward visits and prison visits, presentation of crash scenes
- ✗ Providing educational or information in written or group format to young offenders
- ✗ Diversion programs that rely on physical training or boot camps