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ISOLATION -

A preliminary discussion starter on the use of isolation/time-out/separate confinement in Reception and Youth Training Centres.

One aspect of the institutional treatment of children and youth deserves renewed consideration: that of isolation, or 'locking up children' as Millham, Bullock and Hosie (1978), more starkly, but perhaps more honestly, describe it.

Secure separation rooms, "slots" as they have commonly been known, have been around in our institutions for many years. Now no longer in use in some facilities, where available the function of these rooms varies considerably as do the conditions covering the detaining of children and youth in such a setting. Also while some institutions have elaborate guidelines, others appear to have few guidelines available at all.

It is obvious that there exist significant groups both for and against its use. Before any common ground can be reached, and hence any commonly accepted standards and procedures adopted, it is clear that the differing viewpoints need to be expressed.

Ethical/legal/etc considerations

Where programs involve a captive audience, such as in our Reception and Youth Training Centres, then it is crucial that humane, ethical and legal considerations are paramount. Increasingly, there has been an awareness that the rights of institutionalized children and youth can be violated.

Some issues, -

[1] why treat those who have broken the law by processes which don't themselves sedulously adhere to the law

[2] isolation - separate confinement : for wards it is an unconscionable abuse of guardianship

[3] in care of sentenced youth it is like a secondary 'punishment' - see Ombudsman's report

[4] Is isolation legally defensible?
ethically defensible? If so ... when?

[5]

Of course, if the goal is to cause the child/youth to suffer then it does not matter whether the procedure has therapeutic value or not, and isolation should not then be confused ^{with} or disguised ^{as} with treatment, see however UN standards and DCWS regulations.

[6] The more powerful the threats [and incentives] come the closer to co-ercion one comes

[7] Issue of voluntariness and "rights of the child" including right of appeal and review

[8] Benefits to the child/youth, staff and society and possible goal conflicts should be borne in mind.

