

The NOJOS Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Continuum

Empirical Framework

The Risk-Need-Responsivity Principles (RNR) provide the empirical framework for the NOJOS treatment-placement continuum. The RNR model is based on an evidence-based framework that supports effective treatment and management of adolescents who have engaged in sexually abusive behavior. As documented in the ATSA Adolescent Practice Guidelines (2017):

Risk: The Risk principle focuses on factors within the adolescent and his/her environment associated with sexual and/or general reoffending. Consistent with this principle, the number and constellation of a youth's risk factors, as established, and identified through appropriate assessment, determine a youth's need for structure and supervision as well as the intensity of treatment services. Adolescents with the highest risk are provided the most intensive services in more restrictive settings.

Need: The Need principle focuses on dynamic risk factors that, if modified, would reduce the adolescent's risk for sexual or general reoffending. This principle ensures the target and focus of interventions are directly related to the dynamic risk factors for reoffending that have been assessed as present for the individual youth. Other factors that are present, but not necessarily empirically related to recidivism, also may be addressed to support the well-being of the youth.

Responsivity: The Responsivity principle incorporates effective methods to maximize the adolescent's and his/her family's ability to benefit and learn from rehabilitative interventions. This principle states that interventions are to be delivered in ways that are sensitive and responsive to the youth's learning style, cognitive or developmental strengths and challenges, mental health status, psychological characteristics, and motivation to change, as well as his/her relevant cultural, gender, and other individual and family factors that affect the youth's and his/her family's ability to positively engage in and respond to interventions. This principle also notes the need to adapt and adjust the treatment and interventions as the adolescent matures and changes, or as more information is acquired that would suggest appropriate modifications.

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Intended Scope, Applicability and Use

These protocols and standards focus on adolescents ages 13 through 17; however, youth vary in their cognitive and psychological development. Therefore, NOJOS considers this age range to be advisory and recognizes there are times when these guidelines may be reasonably applicable and helpful in working with youth outside of the specified age range.

Further, for information on children with sexual behavior problems who are 12 years and younger, please refer NOJOS Protocols and Standards for Children and Latency Age Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors.

See also, the Report of the ATSA Task Force on Children with Sexual Behavior Problems (2006). Additionally, for information specific to individuals with intellectual disabilities and problematic sexual behavior, please refer to Assessment, Treatment, and Supervision of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Problematic Sexual Behaviors (2014), or the Assessment and Treatment of Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities Who Exhibit Sexual Problems or Offending Behaviors (2015). Further, for information on adult males who have sexually offended, refer to ATSA Practice Guidelines for Assessment, Treatment, and Management of Male Adult Sexual Abusers (2014). These and other resources are available on the ATSA website at www.atsa.com.

The positions articulated in these protocols and standards are intended to serve as recommended, current best practices for practitioners providing services to adolescents who have engaged in problematic sexual behaviors and/or sexually abusive behavior. These guidelines are not intended to replace any local, state, provincial, or federal statutes, provisions, mandates, promulgated ethical codes, or practice requirements/parameters established for regulated professions. Practitioners are encouraged to take steps to achieve an appropriate resolution in cases where a conflict between these standards and legal and professional obligations occur.