
Nurturing Potential, *Promoting Change*, Preserving Families

Aggression Replacement Training

[Aggression Replacement Training: A Comprehensive Intervention for Aggressive Youth](#) is the primary treatment modality throughout the Tidewater Youth Services Commission. This program has been extensively researched and is designated an “effective” program by the [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#) and a Model Program by the U.S. Department of Justice and the American Correctional Association. It was developed as a means of working with aggressive young people to help them learn new, pro-social ways of behaving. Its effectiveness has been confirmed in dozens of studies.

The Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.) model is based on social learning theory. Arnold Goldstein, the program’s developer, notes that “research has demonstrated that aggression is primarily learned behavior, learned by observation, imitation, direct experience, and rehearsal.” Underlying A.R.T. is the idea that every act of adolescent aggression in school, at home, and in the community has multiple causes, both external and internal. Therefore, A.R.T. addresses three realms that contribute to aggressiveness: (1) weak interpersonal and social/cognitive skills, (2) impulsiveness and a reliance on aggressive means of having their daily needs met; and (3) egocentric and underdeveloped moral reasoning. The first phase of Aggression Replacement Training is called Skillstreaming. In this phase, basic social skills are modeled, practiced and reinforced. Youth are taught “what to do”. The second component, Anger Control Training, is emotion-oriented. Here participants are taught to identify triggers, cues, reducers, reminders and use of appropriate skills. In short, they are taught “what not to do”. The third phase, Moral Reasoning Training, presents a variety of moral dilemmas and asks participants to explore possible solutions. In this way, youth clarify their values and determine internal reasons about why it is important to behave in more ethical, mature and appropriate ways.

In order to implement Aggression Replacement Training with integrity and fidelity to the model, the Tidewater Youth Services Commission undertook a major staff training initiative in 2006, followed by additional sessions in early 2009. Robert Calame and Kim Parker of the Batshaw Youth and Family Centres of Montreal, Canada conducted these sessions and continue to provide oversight on the Commission’s implementation of the program. Mr. Calame is a member of the Advisory Board with PREPSEC International, based on the broader base of the Prepare Curriculum, which was Arnold Goldstein’s expansion of A.R.T., designed to teach a larger complement of Social Emotional Competencies. [Click here for more information on PREPSEC International.](#) Two members of the TYS Commission staff, Shawn Sawyer and Tim Heiler, have been certified to provide ongoing staff development within our agency and as a service to our community partners. For more information on Aggression Replacement Training, please contact Shawn Sawyer, Deputy Director of the Tidewater Youth Services Commission, at 757-488-9161 or ssawyer@tyscommission.org.