RESPECT LIMITS
A mandatory educational programme for juvenile sex offenders
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Introduction
Juvenile sex offenders who have been arrested in the Netherlands for a first-time sexual offence may be obliged to take part in Respect Limits, a behavioural intervention on sexual boundaries developed by Rutgers. Complex situational factors such as group pressure and ambiguous sexual communication are important risk factors for this group (Hoïng et al, 2010). Respect Limits is evidence-based and has been approved by the Ministry of Justice (Accreditation Panel, March 2012) demonstrating that the intervention meets the necessary quality requirements in making a contribution towards decreasing recidivism.

Aim and description of Respect Limits
• Main aim: relapse prevention and promotion of healthy sexual behaviour.
• The intervention also affects important dynamic risk factors for general delinquency:
  - susceptibility to peer pressure of false friends.
  - impulsive behaviour.
  - experiencing little support from parents.
• A cognitive behavioural approach (in particular the relapse prevention model) and parent guidance, supported by psycho-education, are effective methods in reducing recidivism of young sex offenders.

Programme
The training consists of 10, 15 or 20 weekly sessions of 90 minutes each. Stereotypes and misconceptions about sexuality and behaviour, including gender-specific behaviour, are discussed and corrected. Skills are improved with respect to sexuality and relationships, impulsive behaviour and peer-pressure. Parents are actively involved.

Example
Learning how to recognize signals in risk situations - visualised by a crossroads - and exploring new coping skills in order to choose alternative behaviour.

Facts and figures
(registration Rutgers 2014, N=34)
• 47% of participants were 14 years or younger when they committed the offence.
• Most victims (65%) were the same age as the perpetrator, 29% much younger.
• 50% were group sex offenders.
• Boys and parents gave Respect Limits a report rating of 9.

References