

# Impact of Computer-Based, Psycho-Social Training on Depression, Among Youth At Risk for Gang Involvement and Other Forms of Delinquency.

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## ABSTRACT

Youth in gang ridden neighborhoods are at risk of trauma-related mental health disorders, which are linked to school failure and delinquency. They rarely seek out services for those problems. A school based gang prevention program in Los Angeles (JIPP) uses a computer-based social-emotional training program (Ripple Effects) as the psycho-social component of a comprehensive intervention that also addresses bio-behavioral, academic and family support issues. This case series measured the impact on depression of exposure to the computerized training among 163 students in the JIPP program. Four cohorts of students completed the Beck Depression Inventory at the beginning and end of the 18 week multi-component intervention. The intervention resulted in statistically significant score decreases for one cohort ( $p < .01$ ) and for the four cohorts combined ( $p < .01$ ). Limitations in the study make it impossible to attribute the changes solely to the Ripple Effects intervention. We present these findings as promising, but inconclusive.

KEY WORDS: depression; at-risk youth; trauma; gang prevention; Juvenile Intervention and Prevention Program