

Guiding questions

Broadly, this review examined ‘What works?’ and ‘What do we think might work?’ when using OAls with this target group. Guiding questions included:

1. How and in what contexts are OAls being used with this target group?
2. What considerations are important when using OAls with this target group?
3. What ‘mechanisms of change’ and processes are important, or have been shown to have an impact with this target group?
4. What are the beneficial outcomes of OAls for this target group?
5. What are some examples of effective OAls with this target group?
6. What do we know about negative or detrimental outcomes and what doesn’t work?
7. What works for this target group specifically?
8. What implications are there for practitioners and programs providing OAls with this target group?

Primary attention was paid to OAI program descriptions, models and practices used with and on behalf of this target group, and evidence relating to the effects and effectiveness (i.e. outcomes) of those interventions. Research beyond this primary focus was included in the review to help extend the depth and breadth of findings for this target group, including:

- Research relating to young people who have experienced serious adversities such as childhood abuse, neglect and family violence;
- Other non-OAI therapeutic approaches and comparable treatment effects;
- Additional relevant contextual literature to help delineate what it is about OAI that sets it apart from other forms of therapeutic intervention.

Methods used

The search methods used in this review were designed to provide an accessible and replicable summary of evidence to identify descriptions of effective OAI programs, models or practices used with ‘at risk’ and vulnerable young people aged 13 to 18, ultimately to inform OAI program design and practice with this target group.

On this basis, the review was informed by a systematic review of recent literature, combined with the results of a recent meta-analysis (Bowen, 2016), a previous extensive review of Australia OAI literature (Pryor, 2009) and in light of several other reviews (e.g. Bettman, Tucker, Tracy and Parry, 2014; Skouteris, O’Connor and Cox, 2015). It also includes findings from a significant number of papers sourced from international adventure therapy colleagues, and the technique known as ‘snowball sampling’ through which primary and secondary searches uncover further sources.

This review is not a meta-analysis, nor a systematic review of randomised control trial studies; nor is it intended that these results will meet strict Cochrane protocols for the conduct of systematic reviews. While the body of evidence includes results of several relevant meta-analysis and the results of some randomised control trial studies and is therefore strong, it also includes results of single programs with small sample sizes and mixed research methods, adding richness to results.

