

# Juvenile delinquency



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Juvenile Delinquency: Is there really a light at the end of the tunnel? Ever sit down and think about where your tax money is going? Millions of dollars a year is spent on juvenile crime reduction programming. The real question comes, does all this money benefit the troubled youth? What kind of programs work best? Is there a high turn around rate as juvenile's progress into adulthood? Although millions of dollars have been spent on alternative sanction programs, some programs tend to work better than others in the long road.

While some people believe that being a violent offender as a juvenile causes people to continue down the same path, restorative justice programs may provide hope for some young adults. With the help of juvenile programs, changing the path of young repeat offenders can cause of an all together strengthened community. Studies show that in 1992, there were over 2.3 million juvenile arrests between the ages of twelve and sixteen (Gavazzi, 1999).

With this many arrests being made a year, almost accounting for 16% of the total arrest rate, better restorative programs are being called in to try and help these troubled teens. Restorative justice efforts include victim-offender mediation, family-group conferencing, and circle sentencing. Victims become an important part of the offender's rehabilitation process. Since communities are putting so much of their tax money towards bettering America's troubled youth, members of communities want to make sure that they are ensured public safety.

Through this, juvenile halfway houses have been introduced into several cities across America. Then the question arises, which programs are more

beneficial for juveniles? A study was conducted on different categories of juveniles put into halfway houses, this including race, age, family configuration and diagnosis. With these components, counselors as well as specialized professionals were able to obtain a set goal for each offender. During a two year study, such aspects such as degree of crime, length of stay and schedule while in the home.

Juveniles admitted into the halfway house were offenders of drug related crimes, theft as well as assault crimes. While halfway houses are beginning to prove themselves as helpful institutions, a method known as "scared straight" has been adapted since the 70's. Not only were juveniles shown what would be their inevitable future if they did not change their ways, there were also interventions where current inmates would show the harshest conditions.

Since this program is rather new, there are still doubts about if it is an effective method to turn young teens lives around. Unfortunately, problems may arise when juveniles are taken from families and placed into prison or other sanction programs. There is the possibility of them losing the stability and consistency they received from home. Knowing that juveniles habits can be deterred if caught early on before they establish a criminal career however, makes the transition a little more comfortable.

Now the question still remains, out of the numerous amounts of programs available, which ones work best in the long run? Continuing studies give us as researchers an insight as to what the long run statistics are for juveniles. As many sad cases there are about juveniles who lead down the wrong path and even with assistance are unable to turn their lives around, there are

about half as many who actually do succeed. These individuals take everything learned in institutions and become role models for unfortunate juveniles who believe that there is no hope for the future.