

Future of the juvenile justice center



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Future of the Juvenile Justice Center: Private Sector Influences A 1999 survey of jurisdictions across the nation revealed that 81 percent had “ at least one active private sector contract” for their juvenile divisions (Levinson and Chase, 2000, p. 156). Some of the larger jurisdictions had hundreds of such contracts. These findings are similar to a survey completed in 1991; the percentage of nonprofit private sector contracts changed only slightly, while the number of for-profit private sector contracts increased significantly.

Respondents indicated that the private sector provided certain services and types of expertise that the police themselves lacked, and that these services were typically cheaper than allowing the jurisdictions to handle counseling and community re-integration. On the negative side, respondents commented that the quality of such services must be closely monitored especially when for-profit providers were involved, and that youth are more likely to violate the rules of private sector providers because they are perceived as being outside the juvenile justice system.

Two places where private sector assistance is especially key are early intervention and electronic home monitoring (EHM). Community based early intervention programs, working in concert with the juvenile justice system as a whole, address child abuse and neglect, poverty, jobs for youth, and truancy (LWV, 2009; OJJDP, 2001). These early interventions can lead to better outcomes for youth and tap into the private sector to provide services which are out of the skill-set of police departments.

Electronic home monitoring is a highly effective way to manage probation and aftercare. For instance, Alaska has found that electronic home monitoring is effective for returning juveniles to the community and their homes (Corrections Today, 2005). The use of EHM helps ensure the safety of

the community while at the same time offering some control over the movements of juveniles. EHM is a good alternative to incarceration or detention for many youth, and allows the youth to remain in their communities under supervision (OJJDP, 2001). Home monitoring services are run by for-profit private sector contractors in most states.

Recommendations

The juvenile justice system must continue encouraging the involvement of the private sector (through both nonprofit and for-profit contractors). Private sector services for youth relieve budgetary and manpower strains on jurisdictions and in some cases offer better alternatives for youth (OJJDP, 2001; LWV, 2009).

The private sector should be enlisted in early intervention programs and contacts within jurisdictions must be maintained (LWV, 2009).

Private sector interventions with juveniles provide more economical services than jurisdictional interventions, especially when counseling and ongoing community re-integration are involved (Levinson and Chase, 2000).

The contracting process must be carefully monitored to ensure that private sector services providers meet the terms of their contracts. Training for all involved parties is a must (OJJDP, 2001).

Electronic home monitoring of certain youth should be encouraged (Corrections Today, 2005). For-profit providers must strictly meet guidelines for service and youth must be encouraged to regard EHM violations as serious (OJJDP, 2001).

When jurisdictions make the investment in private sector contracts, they are typically long term contracts with a lot of continuity (Levinson and Chase, 2000). This type of continuity is important for both the youth and the

jurisdictions involved because procedures can be established and maintained.

References

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