

# Effect of parents on recidivism



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## **Introduction**

The younger generation is important to the future of the country, yet juvenile crime continues to be a serious problem in the United States. Over the years the numbers have decreased, but the data shows that the number of youth committing crimes in the US is still in the millions. The focus of detention centers, court agencies, juvenile justice policymakers, and parents alike is to reduce the rate and the occurrence of recidivism among the juvenile population. Recidivism is the tendency of persons with prior criminal history, to be arrested, convicted, or incarcerated repeatedly. The facilities that deal with the criminal population look at recidivism to determine how successful institutional programs are and what is and is not working. There has been much research done on what contributes to recidivism. Recidivism is a complex problem with numerous predictors, but in this research paper, two areas will be discussed. I will focus on the area of parenting and the effects it has on the adolescents who fall victim to recidivism, as well as neighborhood-level factors that influence recidivism. While looking at these two factors that maintain the rate of recidivism, I will present current solutions that have been employed to attempt to reduce the trend, through community and institutionally based programs. The research and analysis presented in this paper should offer valuable insight for social workers, juvenile justice professionals, policymakers and any person who is concerned with public safety and who are interested in the success of the youth and future generations.

Parenting and Juvenile Recidivism

When minors commit small offenses, parents usually disapprove in the moment and then it is forgotten. Parents believe their child made a mistake, and think that their disapproval will be enough to deter the child from doing it again. However, it takes more involvement and presence of parents in a child's upbringing and follow through with discipline, if needed, to discourage further engagement of more serious offenses. The involvement of parents plays a prominent role in the lives of children as they are developing and learning self - control (Williams and Smalls 2015). Parents are a child's first teacher and they learn what they can and cannot get away with by how active the parents are in their lives. A child that does things frequently and can get away with them is more likely to continue to gauge how much they can get away with, without consequence. Without proper parenting skills or tactics, the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and recidivism are at a higher risk. Charles W. Turner and Thomas Sexton did a study that concluded, rejection from parents, hostility, poor communication, and poor supervision of children was found to be significant risk factors associated with delinquent behavior by adolescents (2010). Adolescents are trying to navigate life and the guidance and supervision of their parents can give them a greater understanding of what is acceptable behavior. When parents do not take this aspect of parenting seriously, it can influence their children having a higher likelihood of being repeat offenders. Ruthie Williams and Elsie W. Smalls explored four research questions to gain further understanding of the relationship between parental supervision and recidivism among juvenile offenders. These four questions explored the relationship between the monitoring of offenders within a detention facility, positive parenting styles, permissive supervision, and inconsistent discipline practices in relationship

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to recidivism among juveniles (2015). From this research, they concluded that there are relationships between parental influence and the chances of a child recidivating. It should come as no surprise that the less engaged in monitoring, the more likely a child is to be committed to detention facilities and be committed more than once.

There are many ways in which parents can influence their children's behaviors and neglect is one of the many that also leads children down the path of delinquency. Neglect is defined as "any recent act or failure to act on the part of the caretaker, which results in serious physical or emotional harm..." (CAPTA 2010). With little structure in the home and less positive parental physical engagement, children are more likely to try to find what they are missing from home, in places outside of the home. Children who feel that they are rejected by their parents and those who are victims of neglect and abuse are at greater risk of being a delinquent when they reach teenage years. If these teens are lucky, they will have an ongoing case with child services to help get them into a better situation. However, in many cases, these teenagers are picked up and released back into the same circumstance of neglect. Teens who are involved with both the courts and child welfare are also more likely to recidivate because they find themselves under more scrutiny. Emotionally, an adolescent who is being brought up in a neglectful situation, feeling all the pressures of social institutions, will find themselves engaging in criminal activities. It cannot just be the job of child welfare workers to help those who have offended. Juvenile justice courts and child welfare need to work together to help those who are in unfortunate, neglectful situations. Research shows that adolescents who are dually

involved, the population of youth that has simultaneously open and active cases in both child welfare and juvenile justice, are at greater risk for recidivism (Ryan, Williams, and Courtney 2013). Within 18 months from the first arrest, approximately 61% of dually involved juveniles experience subsequent arrests. Persistent maltreatment is an important predictor of the likelihood that a child will recidivate. Adults who have teenagers that are in detention facilities need to take parenting classes, to prevent the lackadaisical parental techniques and offer children more hope and positive outcomes in their adolescent and adult lives.

### Neighborhood Effects on Recidivism

Juvenile recidivism does not solely lie in the hands of the parents. Where children live can also be a huge motivator for their actions. The saying, “ I am a product of my environment” holds true in this case. Children’s brains are like sponges, they absorb everything around them. They are vulnerable to the ways of others around them. Many adolescents that are found in the criminal system come from neighborhoods that fall under the United States poverty line. In these neighborhoods, the mentality of those that live there is different from those who live in a wealthy neighborhood. Crimes are committed in all neighborhoods, but the types of crimes that adolescents commit vary by the kind of neighborhood they live in. In densely populated, low-income neighborhoods, there is a greater availability of drugs and alcohol, more gang members, more gang-related activities, more violence, more juvenile delinquents and the increased concentration of adolescent offenders’ results in more crime. These are predictors as to why an adolescent might offend or reoffend when in the same area or areas of

similar makeup (Grunwald et al. 2009). The higher the disadvantage of a neighborhood, the more likely the adolescent is to commit drug crimes. Drug crimes can escalate to violent crimes and the cycle is continuous in these neighborhoods. The more involved a teen is in their neighborhood, community watch, or neighborhood organizations to clean and keep the neighborhood safe, the less likely that person is to offend or re-offend. As humans, we internalize who we are by how others perceive us to be, and once a child is labeled as delinquent and a criminal, the more likely that child is to find groups and activities that hold this perception to be true.

Sociologist Erving Goffman has a theory that he refers to as the dramaturgical model of social life, where he examines the nuances and importance of face to face social interaction. Goffman's theory is the idea that people put on a performance as they interact with each other, that people are always under what he calls, "impression management".

Impression management is where each try to present themselves and behave in ways that will avoid embarrassment. So, for many juvenile delinquents who recidivate, it is simply because they are in the confines of their neighborhood and their everyday interactions are with other delinquents. For some, the combination of poverty, ethnic ties, opportunity, and the economic benefits of drug selling are all factors that motivate these youths, majority Hispanic, to engage in these criminal activities (Grunwald et al. 2009). Not wanting to disappoint family members that are affiliated with certain activities, not having the opportunities to be involved in better neighborhood activities, and the lack of stability economically, are some of the neighborhood level factors that push this recidivism forward and maintain its existence among juveniles.

## Solutions to Juvenile Recidivism

Something is going on today, if so many children are committing crimes that place them in confinement. Adolescents are released back into the home of neglectful and abusive parents, are subdued by the projections of other's perceptions, and coerced by the constraints of the neighborhood in which they reside. When they are released back into the home where the neglect and abuse is taking place, the chances are higher that they will end up back in the back seat of an officer's vehicle and in front of a judge. To disrupt this trend in the lives of the offenders, Thomas Sexton and James Alexander offer the solution of functional family therapy. "Functional Family Therapy (FFT) draws on a multisystemic perspective in its family-based prevention and intervention efforts" (Sexton and Alexander 2000). This approach is family based, and focuses on treatment of behavioral problems of adolescents. The problems may stem from home, school, or neighborhood external factors, so these factors must be examined during treatment. For the success of this treatment, offenders and parents, must be open and willing to be a part of every phase of the treatment. Functional family therapy has the lowest rate of recidivism when implemented.

Another way to reduce recidivism is through restitution programs. Major parts of this kind of program include monetary payment to the victims or their families, community service work, mediation between the offender and the victim, and job information services. Though probation is a way to monitor juvenile's, probation alone is not enough to reduce the rate of recidivism (Butts and Synder 1992). Juveniles that participated in restitution programs had a lower chance of recidivating, as well as those who were on

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probation and a part of a restitution program. Some would criticize and say that nothing will stop recidivism among juveniles unless the juvenile themselves want to change their behavior. Indeed, it is the choice of the offender to want to change, however, with guidance and proper choices laid out before them, the want to change will be greater than the want to revert back to old ways.

## Conclusion

Concerns regarding juvenile delinquency and recidivism are important to society when the youth is vital to the future of the country. One day the youth will become adults and those adults will be responsible for the way the country is perceived, accepted and ran. It is up to those in authoritative positions now to help the youth that have been labelled juvenile delinquents by society. Nonetheless, the prevention of delinquency and recidivism starts in the home. If a child is brought up in an abusive and neglectful home than the chances for offending and recidivating are greatly increased. The neighborhood environment which an adolescent is exposed to has a significant effect on their outcomes. If the youth is surrounded by criminals and criminal activity, there is a higher chance of involvement. “ Assessing the extent to which particular risk factors are associated with continued or curtailed re-offending represents an important line of inquiry” (Wolff et al. 2015). Policy makers, juvenile court systems, parents of offenders, and those without teens in the juvenile system; they need to explore better parenting techniques and more community involvement opportunities need to be created. This will aid in the reduction of the rate of recidivism and delinquency among juveniles. Treatment plans, and restitution programs are <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-parents-on-recidivism/>



good ways that families and communities can get involved in the rehabilitation of the offenders. Witnessing juveniles provide restitution services, can change the way society views the offender and thus change the way they view themselves. It is indeed a multisystemic process that everyone should take a part in building. With these changes and efforts from all, there will be a greater chance for there being no child left behind.

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