

# Current events

Law



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One of the great problems with juvenile boot camps is the danger of abuse at the hands of camp directors and staff. The children sent to camp are involved in antisocial behavior. Many times their parents, teachers and probation officers are very frustrated. It is tempting to believe that sending them away into an environment where many of their freedoms and privileges are taken away will help them to mature and see the destructive course their lives have taken. The problem with this situation is the power that is taken from the juveniles is then turned over to the staff at the camp. This can lead to abuse, making the boot camp experience ineffective and potentially deadly for the juveniles involved.

Officials in Pasadena are investigating just such an incident. Video taken in 2009 was recently released that showed instructors forcing a juvenile to run with a car tire over his head. Each time he fell, he was ridiculed and abused. The juvenile was crying throughout the video. In another clip, juvenile camp members were forced to drink water until they vomited. These sorts of practices serve no real purpose in developing the character of juvenile offenders. Other directors of boot camps acknowledge that extreme physical training is sometimes a part of their programs, but humiliation, intimidation and abuse serve no purpose. They point out that these activities actually are counterproductive to developing responsibility and focus in the juveniles in their camp. The Pasadena prosecutor's office is determining which charges to bring against the director of the camp. The article notes that juvenile boot camps in general are under scrutiny because there is, as yet, no good process for checking the qualifications of instructors or for reporting abuses. State legislation is hoping to remedy this lack of oversight.

Another article that points to the lack of effectiveness of juvenile boot camps  
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can be found in the Texas Observer. In this article, the entire idea of a military style boot camp being a deterrent to future criminal activity is brought into question. The author Emily Deprang cites recent studies that suggest a high recidivism rate among juvenile offenders that are sent to boot camps. She cites the case of the T. L. Roach boot camp in north Texas. It is the last state run boot camp. The facility has about 400 beds but only 30 of them are occupied. She says that juveniles are sent to this facility for 180 days and then released. Most of them go on to commit future crimes as adults. She calls into question the cost and the efficacy of the boot camp system. This is highlighted by the fact that many prosecutors she spoke with were not even aware that it existed anymore. She claims that current data suggests juvenile boot camps are outmoded and ineffective as places to prevent recidivism among juvenile offenders.

These two articles both show that juvenile boot camps are not effective. The boot camp system is full of scandal and is founded on a faulty premise. They are unregulated and thus suspect in how effective they actually are. Other alternatives to boot camps should be used instead for juvenile offenders.

#### Bibliography

Deprang, Emily. " The Last Boot Camp." The Texas Observer. The Texas Observer, 23 Feb. 2012. Web. 09 Mar. 2012. .

" Pasadena Police Probe Possible Boot Camp Abuses." The Seattle Times. The Seattle Times, 28 Oct. 2011. Web. 09 Mar. 2012. .