

# Do curfews keep teens out of trouble argumentative essay

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



## **Introduction**

This essay considers and discusses the potentially positive effects of curfews for teenagers; i. e. do they keep teenagers out of trouble? Whilst it is not possible to keep teens under observation 24/7, hence it could be said that they will get into trouble at other times of the day, even at school or college for example, is there a special benefit in restricting their movements late at night?

## **The Arguments**

A positive view of the need for teen curfews was offered by Rabbi Shmuley (2010). In his opinion curfews can help engender a sense of responsibility in teenagers by imposing discipline and supervisory control. He described how teens are at that stage in their lives where they are “ experimenting and pushing boundaries.” Also, he considered that parents need to communicate to their teen offspring that school and family values are more important than “ partying and socializing.” Although it is natural for the youngsters to be rebellious about the curfew concept they must understand that whilst going out and enjoying times with their peers is OK, there is also a need for “ discipline and responsibility.” As Shmuley said, the curfew is not all about the kids mixing with the wrong friends or parents being anxious about their child’s whereabouts.

Zeiger (n. d.) offered some “ Facts About Teen Curfews” including notes about legal precedence and several case studies. As far as legal precedence is concerned, some courts have overturned curfew ordinances on the basis of infringement of constitutional rights, for example. The case studies Zeiger

covered produced mixed findings, although most agreed that crime rates had fallen by using the curfew. Overall, she suggested that because there are mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of curfews, one should form one's own opinion based on a study of available information and evidence. "Setting a Curfew for Teens" (n. d.) looked at the subject of curfews from a different viewpoint; that of an "unofficial" curfew set purely by individual parents for their own children. In the author's view, setting a curfew is appropriate, though it is suggested that to begin with the time is set relatively early (say 10pm), shifting it later as they grow older and have demonstrated compliance with the curfew up to that point (i. e. rewarding them for good behavior). Further, the ultimate and latest time limit is suggested as midnight, on the basis that midnight is late enough and that state laws usually prohibit youngsters driving after midnight anyway. It is also strongly recommended that the curfew once set is enforced and that punishment such as "grounding" should be the consequence of flouting the rules.

"Juvenile Justice Reform Initiatives in the States 1994-1996" (n. d.) described curfews as a commonly-used policy to discourage "juvenile victimization and delinquency." The article noted that although the curfew is a tool that has been intermittently employed for much of the 20th century, it tends to be employed more at times when youngsters are perceived to be more in need of such control; for example when juvenile crime seemed to be on an increasing trend about 40 years ago. The article noted that although many States have provisions in their legislation to implement curfews, at the time of publication only Hawaii had gone ahead had imposed a statewide

curfew. Although the laws vary in detail between States and towns and cities, most reportedly restrict the movements of juveniles from 11pm to 6am, confining them to their homes during those times. The article did note that there are usually exemptions for specific circumstances, just as there are - in some places - tighter controls in particular localities, where crime is more likely. The penalties for breaking the curfew vary, too. Some can be as little as a \$50 fine, whereas in some instances fines can be much larger or even sanctions - including jail - can be imposed against the parents. But are curfews effective? And do they have a positive effect overall?

The same article (" Juvenile Justice Reform Initiatives in the States 1994-1996", n. d.) offered some pros and cons of the curfew policy, which is based upon the dual objectives of crime prevention and victimization of juveniles, i. e. to protect the law-abiding youngsters from crime, and to deny the criminally-oriented youth a greater opportunity to commit crime. The article refers to an FBI report of 1994, which claimed that the curfew system is anticipated to reduce crime levels in the criminally-minded youth group and will simultaneously protect other youth who tend to be the victims of the first group. The article also pointed out that it is easier for parents to ensure their child is home on time when it is known that all others of that age are similarly restricted by a legally-imposed curfew deadline. Whilst the article reported that there is not a substantial amount of evidence to validate the effectiveness of the curfew policy; in one case, that of summertime in Detroit in 1976, youth gang activity was reduced during the curfew hours, but showed signs of increase at other times of the day instead. There have also been numerous objections to the principle of imposing curfews, generally on

the grounds of infringement of civil liberties. It must be said that - according to the article - there have been curfew success stories. After three months of imposing such a curfew in Dallas, police there reported a drop of almost 18 percent in victimization of youngsters during the periods of curfew and an almost 15 percent drop in arrests for juvenile crime. Similarly, in New Orleans where the "dusk-to-dawn" curfew policy was one of the most stringent across the entire nation, within a year of its imposition they were able to report a fall in juvenile crime of 27 percent, plus reductions in armed robberies (33 percent) and car theft (42 percent). Yet a third success story came from Long Beach in California. Their curfew (10pm to 6am) achieved a reported fall in juvenile crime of 14 percent and a reduction in "gang-related shootings" of almost 23 percent.

Favro (July 2009) reported that 78 of 92 large cities in America have youth curfews - most during the night hours but some in school hours too (to keep the streets free of children in those times). The curfews are aimed at preventing youth crime, but also to make parents more responsible for their youngsters, and to give law enforcement agencies more ability to deal with individuals acting suspiciously. He reported that from the first curfew imposed in 1880 in Omaha, the numbers have grown over the years, to an estimated 500 or more across the U. S. today.

Favro also reported that although the curfew is a popular and inexpensive tool for fighting crime, there is little solid evidence that they are effective and are often questioned from a constitutional standpoint. However, he noted that in San Antonio in Texas, a drop in youth victimization of a staggering 84 percent was achieved after three years of curfew. He noted

that a possible reason why there is little solid evidence to support the effectiveness of curfews is that there are so many variables involved.

Overall, he considered that the curfew is “ a tool to identify a problem, not a solution.”

## Conclusions

Overall, whilst there is alleged to be a lack of strong evidence to support the positive effects of teen curfews, there are proven success stories as mentioned earlier. To a considerable extent, one's view about curfews depends on which side of the fence you are. Most teens will be against them, whereas the majority of parents are likely to be in favor, because the law is helping them control their naturally rebellious and independence-seeking children. On balance, since much teenage crime occurs at night, the curfew is likely to help most law-abiding youngsters stay out of trouble.

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