

Alternatives to incarceration

Law



Alternatives to Incarceration of the Alternatives to Incarceration Over the years the need to try alternatives to incarceration has gained much interest and support because the criminal justice option of incarcerating juvenile offenders is replete with many negative effects. Historically speaking incarceration has in a way failed to limit crime owing to many reasons. In an economic context, retaining the juvenile offenders in incarceration amounts to immense burden on the taxpayers as the cost of maintaining prisons is very high (Coyle, 2005). Besides, retaining the juvenile offenders in incarceration exposes those to the more seasoned and adult criminals that have a detrimental impact on their ability and encouragement to commit crime (Coyle, 2005). Moreover, many a time juvenile offenders get involved in violent crimes in prison facilities that curtail their capacity and potential for rehabilitation (Coyle, 2005).

An alternative to incarceration pertains to any punishment that can be extended to a juvenile offender, rather than confining one to prison. Over the years the community based alternatives to juvenile incarceration have shown much promise. Community corrections happen to be one such alternative which allows the juvenile offenders to remain within the community while putting limits to their freedom and the opportunities accessible to them (Jacobson, 2005). While being in the community corrections the juvenile offenders could be extended the possibility of probation tied to varied strict and stringent requirements like reporting diligently and punctually to a probation officer, remaining confined to one's home during specific parts of the day, staying off drugs and attending substance abuse and mental health associated programs. The community based facilities have evinced much promise going by the fact that only 8

<https://assignbuster.com/alternatives-to-incarceration/>

percent of the juvenile offenders in Missouri show recidivism once they are admitted to the community based programs (Gottesman, 2011).

Community service is one other viable option to incarcerating the juvenile offenders. Community service could also be made to be a viable condition to probation or it could be used as an alternative to paying fines (Jacobson, 2005). Since the first three years of introducing the community service alternatives, the state of Illinois has saved almost \$18.7 million (Gottesman, 2011). Community service involves making the offender dedicate oneself to some sort of unpaid work or service for a nonprofit or community organization.

Mental health courts and drug courts are other alternatives to juvenile incarceration. Such courts place the juveniles ailing from mental health disorders, personality problems, and substance abuse and substance addictions in the community oriented mental health programs that are taken care of and supervised by the courts (Jacobson, 2005). This may extend to the juvenile offenders the possibility of inpatient and outpatient medical treatment they need to be able to lead a normal life.

The alternatives to juvenile detention offer many societal and individual benefits. First and foremost they extend more sentencing options to the courts. Each and every juvenile offender happens to be a unique individual and extending similar sentences to every juvenile offender may not serve the purpose.

Alternatives to incarceration help the state to save on mammoth expenditures incurred on maintain and running incarceration facilities and prisons (Clear & Frost, 2014). By assigning community based sentencing alternatives to promising juvenile offenders the state and federal

<https://assignbuster.com/alternatives-to-incarceration/>

governments could save much money that could be put to better use like educating and rehabilitating offenders.

Community based alternatives to incarceration also help the communities remain viable and strengthens the communities and families by allowing the offenders stay in and serve the communities in which they were born and raised (Clear & Frost, 2014).

Thereby alternatives to incarceration are indeed pragmatic when it comes to sentencing and helping juvenile offenders stay away from a life of crime.

References

Clear, T. R., & Frost, N. A. (2014). *The Punishment Imperative*. New York: New York University Press.

Coyle, A. (2005). *Understanding Prisons*. New York: Open University Press.

Gottesman, D. (2011, July). *Juvenile Justice in the US: Facts for Policy Makers*. National

Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1038.html

Jacobson, M. (2005). *Downsizing Prisons*. New York: New York University Press.