

EFFECTIVENESS OF JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

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EFFECTIVENESS OF JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

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Abstract

This paper will examine the current operation of the juvenile justice system along with recommendations to promote the effective components of diversion programs. A brief discussion of crime and substance use by adolescents will be discussed. The traditional response to youth crime through the use of juvenile detention facilities will be discussed, along with the effectiveness of juvenile detention. Diversion programs are examined to show the positive effects they have on the juvenile crime rate in addition to the other needs the program can address. Finally, recommendations will be provided after taking into consideration research to explore the various methods to handle youth crime and substance use.

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Effectiveness of Juvenile Diversion Programs

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Statement of the Problem

Juvenile Diversion Programs were created as a response to the increasing juvenile crime and policy changes. Young individuals are facing more inclinations to use drugs/alcohol and also are committing more crime. However, the juvenile justice system may not be the answer to solving the issues youths are facing. As a result of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice report in 1967, juvenile diversion programs were created to reduce the stigmatizing affects the formality of the juvenile justice system creates.

Juvenile detention facilities have been found have no impact on reducing juvenile crime, yet these facilities are being used in place of other options. Although juveniles do commit crimes and have committed some pretty heinous crimes, the majority of juveniles being placed in facilities have not committed serious crimes. Detention has become a temporary means to an end. Many individuals believe that allowing juveniles to experience juvenile detention will deter them from any further crime and will serve as a wakeup call for juveniles. This same mind set is held by those that hold the final say in the placement of juveniles. As stated by Randall Beger, "judges believe detention instills a strong sense of discipline and accountability and 'corrects' irresponsible behavior" (Beger, 1994, pg. 58). In spite of this, the use of detention in the nation is on a steady rise causing facilities to become overcrowded with young individuals that do not meet the high-risk criteria. About 70 percent are detained for nonviolent offenses (Holman &

Ziedenberg, 2006, pg. 2). This statistic has an overwhelming negative effect on the juveniles that are detained for minor status offenses.

Many of the diversion programs have been cut due the response from legislatures to get tough on crime, yet these programs reduce the costs counties face in handling juvenile delinquency. Additionally, juvenile diversion programs seem to assist the juvenile in other areas they may be struggling with rather than punishing them for a decision they made. Dembo et al, raise an important observation when stating that “contrary to public perception that youths placed in diversion programs have relatively few problems, we found that many drug involved youths are experiencing serious difficulties in a number of important developmental areas” (Dembo et al, 2006, p. 22). A study was completed in Wayne County, MI that showed the cost comparisons for traditional responses to juvenile crime in 2008. The study shows that the Diversion Program, YAP, in Wayne County costs about \$1,500 per youth. Yet intensive juvenile probation for 6-months costs \$50 per day or \$9,000 per youth while placing juveniles in facilities for approximately 45 days costs about \$26,000 per youth. Furthermore, to house juveniles in a detention facility for 6-months costs about \$200 per day or \$36,000 per 6-months. The positives are noticeable in the 2008 report for Wayne County, the juvenile diversion programs saved the county about \$7,500 and \$22,000 per youth. (Hodges et al, 2011, p. 459-460).

Purpose of the Study

Juvenile detention facilities are not the most beneficial place for every young offender and will not put an end to juvenile crime. Instead, money needs to be invested in community based services to assist juveniles in navigating the environment in which they must live. Diversion programs are worth the investment, although they may not divert all crime, it is still worth the time and energy.

A literature review of research surrounding juvenile diversion programs throughout the United States will be completed. With information gathered from these studies and an examination of a couple programs that are up and running, trends of working programs should emerge along with aspects of these programs that do not assist juveniles. The trends will be used to make recommendations as to what makes a successful juvenile diversion program.

Summary of Results

Juvenile diversion programs have grown but have also been depleted due to funding being transferred elsewhere. This study will depict the positive outcomes of juvenile diversion programs in comparison to traditional responses to juvenile crime. Previous studies have shed a negative light on juvenile diversion programs and their effectiveness to reduce juvenile crime, especially in terms of recidivism. Due to this negative light, many legislatures have taken steps to eliminate these programs, yet these programs are more cost efficient and effective for juvenile courts to utilize.

Methods

A brief review of the literature relating to the current juvenile diversion programs will be conducted. Second, the review of literature will analyze some of the existing programs for their admission and operation. Third, an evaluation of programs will be discussed. The findings will be utilized to give recommendations of effective juvenile diversion programs.

Contribution to the field

This paper will provide a list of working/effective operations of juvenile diversion programs. This list can be used to identify what works for other programs to use and to reassess a program's components to inspect the effectiveness of the program. This information can also be utilized for other programs to increase their effectiveness to ensure their funding and also improve the effective rating of diversion programs.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The cost of adolescent crime and substance abuse is excessive. The usage of substances has been found to contribute to crime rates. Youth that report never trying any or only trying alcohol in their lifetime account for 30 percent of arrested or incarcerated youth within the year; whereas youth that report trying alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs in their lifetime account for 61 percent of arrested or incarcerated youth within the year (Dembo et al, 2006). Youth today are committing crimes at younger age, the majority of youth commit their first offense at the age of 15 (Sutton et al, 2008). That being said, youth are also involved in the juvenile justice system due to their mental health.

As evidenced, youth are experiencing a number of needs that require the attention of other systems. Diversion programs can be utilized to assist in providing the resources adolescents need to avoid their continued involvement in the juvenile justice system. These programs allow juvenile needs to be dealt with quickly and effectively in addition to helping youth avoid the stigma of being labeled a delinquent (Sutton et al, 2008). Also, diversion programs can be the early intervention that youth need. Dembo et al point out that, “early intervention services hold promise of redirecting their patterns of behavior in more salutary directions in a shorter time period, at a less cost, and with greater effectiveness, than treating older youths” (Dembo et al, 2006).

The following research focuses on the workings of the juvenile justice system to assist juvenile offenders in avoiding the formality of the court system. The implementation of juvenile diversion programs is inspected for the effective portions that assist to combat and reduce the adolescent crime and substance abuse rates.

SECTION II. TRADITIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE RESPONSE

Juvenile justice is intended to allow juveniles to learn from their choices, in addition to providing them with resources which assist them in altering their thinking patterns (Lipsey et al, 2010). Delinquent juveniles often live in situations that may not be conducive to be a law abiding young individual. Youth need to be given a chance to realize how and where choices will get them if they continue with similar choices and also allow juveniles to overcome and cope with their environmental conditions. All too often society is quick to insinuate that juveniles who do wrong and commit crimes need to be taught a lesson and locked up without realizing the consequences unforgiving facilities such as juvenile secure detention have on youth (Tan, 2012). Secure detention is defined as “the holding of youth, upon arrest, in a juvenile detention facility (e.g., juvenile hall) for two main purposes: to ensure the youth appears for all court hearings and to protect the community from future offending” (Austin, Johnson, & Weitzer, 2005, pg. 1). This placement is intended to be temporary and used as a last resort.

The temporariness of juvenile detention placement was agreed upon in 1987 by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. This council published the standards that were developed by various public and private juvenile justice, criminal justice and professional organizations in *Standards and Guides for the Detention of Children and Youth* (Schwartz, Fishman, Hatfield & Krisberg, 1987). The National Council on Crime and Delinquency emphasis the importance that secure detention should be used as a last resort and for those juveniles that have committed a serious crime or that may be harmful to themselves or community (Schwartz, Fishman, Hatfield & Krisberg, 1987). Regardless of the standards, many youth are being confined in facilities for countless reasons and are experiencing the

unsympathetic environment of detention in which juveniles are “stripped of personal belongings, are placed in cell-like rooms, and are forbidden from moving about freely (Beger, 1994, pg. 57).

Abuse of the Usage of Secure Detention

Many individuals hold the belief that juvenile detention serves an important purpose for the lives of young offenders. Despite the constructive impacts individuals may have, there are numerous youth that do not fit the last resort admission from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. A large number of juveniles that do not pose a risk to the community and are confined in facilities and forced to endure the environment. Austin, Johnson, & Weitzer state that “one-third of all youth held in juvenile detention centers are detained for status offenses and technical violations of probation” (2005, pg.1). More specifically, about 70 percent are detained for nonviolent offenses (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, pg. 2). Unfortunately, the individuals that make the final decision in the placement of juveniles also fall into the same mindset that juvenile offenders may need the “wake up” call of detention despite the intentions of the juvenile justice system. As a result, many juveniles are being confined in juvenile facilities and compelled to endure secure detention for minor offenses.

Effects of Secure Detention

Secure detention is designed to hold youth, upon arrest, in a juvenile detention facility to ensure that youth appear for their court hearings and as protection for the community (Austin, et al, 2005). However, the usage of detention has been found to have unintended consequences.

Secure detention has been found to affect

- Racial/ethnicity divide
- Recidivism among juveniles
 - Pull juveniles further into the juvenile and criminal justice system
 - Detention allows delinquent youth to congregate together
 - Interrupt the natural aging out of crime process
- Mental health
- Future earnings and ability to maintain employment
- Education attainment

Not only has the number of youth being confined in secure facilities been on the rise, the rise has also perpetuated the racial inequality in the criminal justice system to the juvenile justice system. Youth of color are being arrested at higher rates in comparison to those that are not of color, similar to what occurs in the adult criminal system as well. Minority youth are raised in communities that are poorer and crime stricken consequently causing the police to frequent the area more often and therefore witness more crime occurring and arresting more individuals. On the other hand, white youth tend to live in better communities that are not disrupted by constant crime and, as a result have less police presence to witness white youth committing crimes. Holman and Ziedenberg point out that minority youth represented 61 percent of all youth detained in 2003. Further, African-American youth were detained at a rate 4.5 higher than their white counterparts while Latino youth were detained twice the rate of whites (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, p. 12). The unequal detainment and placement in secure facilities for minority youth is seen for minimal offenses. Regarding drug crimes, white youth have self-reported a higher use of heroin and cocaine that is six times the rate of African-American youth yet the

African-American youth are almost “three times more likely to be arrested for a drug crime” (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, p. 13).

Juvenile detention does not provide an environment that is conducive to reduce or prevent juveniles from continuing to commit crime in the future. Austin, Johnson, and Weitzer state that “as many as 50-70 percent of previously confined youth are rearrested within 1 or 2 years after release” (2005, p. 2-3). Delinquent adolescents are confined in a facility with other young offenders and are restrained from being a part of the community. Additionally, juveniles feel as though they have already endured the negative label and stigma of a troubled youth and therefore, are unable to escape it. Further, juveniles that are delinquent and juveniles that are being placed in detention prior to seeing a judge are not separated; instead all juveniles are co-mingled and roomed with one another. Moreover, some secure detention facilities lacks the capabilities to provide resources to the youth in confinement.

Without the proper resources or funding, juvenile detention centers are not able to provide the necessary programming, treatment, or educational services to youth who are detained. “Treatment programs in detention facilities are not designed to address chronic problems requiring sustained and intensive interventions. Instead, programming in detention facilities is generally designed to assist youth in adjusting to the correctional environment, ease the transition back to the community upon release, and identify problems needing long term intervention” (Austin, Johnson & Weitzer, 2005, p. 2). However, youth are committing crimes for a reason and therefore, need to receive all the necessary resources to address what is going on in their lives to attempt changing their thinking. It has become obvious that locking up youth offenders is not going to prevent them from committing further crime. Instead locking up juveniles may potentially lead these juveniles down the road to further criminal behavior (Austin

et al, 2005). Also, detention lacks the services, such as education services for behavioral or mental health, necessary to prevent youth from committing further crime. The lack of these services only adds to the probability of recidivism among youth.

Education is a key factor for individuals to succeed and is an important part of a youth's young life. Although county juvenile detention facilities provide educational services they do not provide specialty teachers for those youth that struggle with school or provide the proper education to the youth in the facility with special educational needs. Moreover, once youth are released, many fail to return to school and continue to feel distant. A study completed by the Department of Education found that "43 percent of incarcerated youth receiving remedial education services did not return to school after release, and another 16 percent enrolled in school but dropped out after only five months" (Tan, 2012, p. 2 and Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, p. 9). School can be a difficult environment for children to conquer but can be even more difficult for youth released from juvenile detention. After being released, the juvenile may not be viewed in a positive manner by their fellow peers, teachers, and other school faculty. School faculty may struggle with the label of having a delinquent in their school. This hardship may result in the student not receiving the assistance they need in order to regain their standing and make up for the work they missed forcing them to feel more negative about themselves in addition to school, which may cause youth to become less law abiding. The study completed by the Department of Education also found that "dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested" (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, p. 9). However, education is not the only factor that affects the ability for youth to maintain a successful life.

Another key factor that can inhibit a young individual from leading the successful life they hoped and wished for is their mental health status. Detention seems to compound the issues

that juveniles face and is not suitable to effectively handle the mental health matters.

Psychologists have discovered that juveniles being admitted into detention with pre-established mental health concerns emerge from detention in a harsher state in comparison to when they were admitted. Holman and Ziedenberg state that, “one-third of incarcerated youth diagnosed with depression, the onset of the depression occurred after they began their incarceration, and another suggests that poor mental health, and the conditions of confinement together conspire to make it more likely that incarcerated teens will engage in suicide and self-harm” (2006, p. 2).

Youth then struggle to receive the proper treatment while in detention because the facilities are experiencing overcrowding and multiple other youth need the same treatment. Unfortunately, youth may fall further and further behind due to their mental health and may not be able to receive the attention necessary to assist them in learning to live and cope with their mental health illness. The earlier an individual can be made aware of changes the sooner they can receive knowledge regarding their status and learn coping strategies to handle their diagnosis and the effects it will have on their life. However, many youth are living longer without a proper diagnosis. It has been stated that 50-70 percent of youth incarcerated have a diagnosable mental illness, one that youth or parents may not have even noticed prior to incarceration (Austin, Johnson & Weitzer, 2005, p. 2). The juvenile system is overwhelmed and juvenile justice officials are being forced to house youth rather than attempt to rehabilitate them while in the facility and start them with resources to assist them in being successful upon release. Moreover, the juvenile system is becoming a dumping site for youth with mental health issues, similar to the adult system, due to the lack of resources for other venues for youth. A U.S. House of Representative interviewed a detention administrator from Washington about his view of detention for youth with mental illness. The detention administrator stated, “We are receiving

juveniles that five years ago would have been in an impatient mental health facility. We have had a number of juveniles who should no more be in our institution than I should be able to fly” (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006, p. 8). With that said, juveniles need to be allowed an opportunity to avoid the environment of secure detention along with the label of being delinquent. Detention should be used as it was intended, as a last resort.

SECTION III. EVALUATION OF CURRENT JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

Juvenile Diversion Programs

In 2005, over 2.1 million individuals under the age of 18 were arrested and between 1980 and 2003, drug arrest violations of juveniles rose over 50% (Cowell et al, 2010). However, the juvenile justice system may not be the answer to solving the issues (mental illness, drug usage, home life, or gang involvement) juveniles are facing. As a result of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice in 1967, juvenile diversion programs were created to reduce the stigmatizing effects the formality of the juvenile justice system creates. However, many of the diversion programs have been cut due to the response from legislatures to get tough on crime, yet these programs reduce the costs counties face in handling juvenile delinquency. Dembo et al, raise an important observation by stating that, "contrary to public perception that youths placed in diversion programs have relatively few problems, we found that many drug involved youths are experiencing serious difficulties in a number of important developmental areas" (Dembo et al, 2006, p. 22). Juvenile diversion programs are able to provide resources for juveniles in the other areas of their life that they are struggling with, yet the programs cost counties less in comparison to other options. A description of these programs was given by Palmer, "Diversion, of course, encompasses a wide range of program components and general interventions—from recreation, advocacy, and resource-brokerage, to vocational or educational training and group or individual counseling" (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000, p. 58). These programs are designed to address at least one area; reduce delinquency and recidivism, increase system efficiency, reduce costs, and reduce the level of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Cocozza et al, 2005).

Juvenile diversion is intended to allow juveniles to avoid becoming formally involved in the juvenile justice system in addition elevating juveniles from suffering from the label of being delinquent. This section of the paper addresses several diversion programs throughout the United States that are available for juveniles to participate in. Upon successful completion, charges against juveniles are either dropped or reduced significantly by the majority of programs. Each program varies in different aspects; however they are all working towards the same goal: reducing juvenile drug use and juvenile recidivism.

180 Juvenile Diversion of Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Waukesha established the program in 2008 as a replacement for the Enlight program. Participation in the program requires juveniles to be referred by a referral source such as the District Attorney, Police agencies, the courts, etc. Juveniles cannot be court ordered or mandated to participate in this program; a voluntary agreement must be made on behalf of the juveniles in order to participate. Additionally, participants must be between 14-20 years of age, facing a misdemeanor or low-level felony and must not have a lengthy criminal history. Juveniles with violent felony charges or any charges of a sexual nature pending will be denied participation from the program.

Upon referral, juveniles are sent an application to complete and must be returned with a \$25 nonrefundable application fee in order to apply for the program. However, if applications are not received by the specified date, then the referral is sent back to the referral source for formal progression through the juvenile justice system (Waukesha County, 2012, p. 2-4).

Once the application is received, an initial interview in-person is required to establish whether the juvenile is eligible for the diversion program. A parent or guardian is required, to

attend the interview as well, unless the juvenile is 17 years of age or older. The initial interview is used to identify the needs of the juvenile along with identification of the proper preventative and intervention services. Following the initial interview and formal acceptance into the program, the juvenile must make a \$300 down payment (Waukesha County, 2012, p. 4).

Upon acceptance into the program, the juvenile must sign a contract that explicitly spells out the restrictions of the program. Within the contract, specifics regarding the attitude of the juvenile, confidentiality, dress code, class attendance, assignments, case management, community service, drug screening, and payments are addressed. Furthermore, juveniles are given notification that they will face disciplinary action or discharge from the program if a violation of any of the restrictions regarding the program occurs (Waukesha County, 2012, p. 4).

The 180 juvenile diversion program ensures that juveniles are “learning from their mistakes” (Waukesha County, 2012, p. 3). This program believes that families and communities play an integral part in assisting juveniles in changing. Waukesha County built the program on “a foundation of family and community involvement, proven methods of diversion from across the U.S. and a solid network of city, county, state and national partnerships” (Waukesha County, 2011). During the nine month program, many facets are incorporated to assist juveniles in redirecting their thinking. Families are involved throughout the process because the program believes that families play an integral part in diversion efforts (waukeshacounty.gov, 2011). Juvenile Diversion in Waukesha County gears their program not only to the juveniles but also the families of the juveniles. Both juveniles and their families participate in fourteen weeks of classes with topics regarding drug and alcohol avoidance, stress and anger management, and nutrition/wellness. As stated by Jante, founder of the 180 Diversion program, the program is focused on the kids and the parents are working together, they attend educational classes together

to learn new skills geared toward opening the line of communication, and to have an opportunity to work on the issues that may have gotten the youth into trouble in the first place (Johnson, 2009). The other six months of the program are probation geared. During this time, juveniles are required to continue to submit to random drug testing, complete 40 hours of community service, and apologize to the victims of their crimes (Johnson, 2009).

During their portion of probation/case management, the juveniles are required to attend two monthly appointments with the diversion program staff and an individual case plan is compiled. The case plan may include having the juveniles' academic progress checked, referrals for treatment/counseling, restorative justice, tutoring, setting goals (short-term and long-term), or participation in extracurricular activities.

Upon successful completion, juveniles are given a certificate to verify their completion and the charges against the juvenile may be reduced or dropped entirely (Waukesha County, 2012, p. 4). However, if a juvenile does not successfully complete the program they will be removed from the program and endure the formal proceedings of their charges (Waukesha County, 2012).

The entire program is funded solely on tuition paid by the participants and donations. In 2009, an annual report stating that the program had an 88% success rate was released. The program admitted 41 participants in 2009 and 36 successfully completed the program. Furthermore, 27 families (36 parents) participated in the classroom portion of the program. As a result of the program in Waukesha County, WI, families have experienced change in both their family and the youth. More specifically, 90% of parents reported a change in their ability to increase listening to each other and being more aware of feelings and 70% reported that the program assisted them in building relationships with their families. More importantly, increased

support from individuals other than family members was expressed by 86% of the clients (Waukesha County, 2009, p. 6).

Northern Star Juvenile Diversion Program, Minnesota

In 1996 the Hennepin County Attorney's Office partnered to establish the program with the Boy Scouts. The Northern Star diversion program is a pre-trial program for minors. The program strives to provide a positive alternative to the formal court process for first-time offenders in addition to reducing recidivism among youth offenders (North Star Juvenile Diversion Program).

Youth participation is dependent on a referral from the local police department. Youth must be first time offenders between the ages of 10-18. The offense charges, facts surrounding the incident, and surrounding circumstances are taken into consideration when determining eligibility. Furthermore, program staff completes an intake meeting with the youth and their parent or guardian where background information is divulged for both the youth and parents/guardians (North Star Juvenile Diversion Program).

The program attempts to "improve the attitudes about the legal system, self-image, teaching better methods of communication, conflict resolution, and preventing a future decision to break the law" during their ten week evening class sessions (North Star Juvenile Diversion Program). Class sessions are held weekly to cover topics such as effects of crime, decision making skills, bullying, conflict resolution, and alcohol and drug education (North Star Juvenile Diversion Program). Additionally, youth are required to complete hours of community service. Upon successful completion, notification is sent to the referring agency and the pending charges against the youth are dismissed.

Funding for the program is provided through a \$50 registration fee for participating youth and families. In addition, funding is presented to the program by city, county, and state funding and grants, private donations, business contribution and local United Way chapters (North Star Juvenile Diversion Program).

Juvenile Breaking the Cycle (JBTC), Oregon

The JBTC program was developed in 1998 by the Department of Youth Services as a result of a cooperative agreement from the National Institute of Justice to implement the program in Lane County Oregon. The design of the program is intended to provide the juvenile justice system monitoring, coordinated treatment and services for those youth that are assessed at high risk for recidivism and substance use. The evidence that multi-component approaches are more appropriate for handling youthful offenders who have multiple co-occurring problems is the foundation for the program (Cowell et al, 2010).

Youth offenders are referred to the Department of Youth Services where a risk assessment is completed to determine the qualifications for youth to participate in the JBTC program. This assessment evaluates the youth on four dimensions: school, family, crime, and drugs (Cowell et al, 2010). As a result of the assessment, the youth who score a high risk for committing crimes or abusing substances are extended an opportunity to participate in JBTC. The youth who participate endure 12 months of justice system oversight (typically probation), treatment for substance abuse, mental health services, educational services, and family and social services (Cowell et al, 2010). Negative and positive behaviors are rewarded with the use of sanctions, rewards and incentives.

As a result of this program, juvenile participants have reduced marijuana use, and recidivism (Cowell et al, 2010). The decrease in use and recidivism is a success not only for the

youth in the program but also for the community. Increasing the investment in juveniles at the early stages decreases the amount needed or required at the later stages or when they become adults.

Correct Course, Michigan

Correct Course aims its intentions at reducing the recidivism rates along with improving psychological functioning. The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office facilitates this program in response to the disproportionate law enforcement contact with minority youth. In addition, the program aims to divert youth at the earliest point of contact to restrict youth from further infiltration into the juvenile justice system (Hodges, Martin, Smith, and Cooper, 2011).

Youth participating in the program (ages 5-21) are low-risk offenders who would otherwise be placed on probation. Participation is granted by the prosecutor's office, based on their recommendation and the agreement on behalf of both the youth and their family. As a requirement, the youth must waive their right to a trial in connection with their charges and with successful completion the current charges against them are dismissed. Correct Course's objective is to introduce and connect youth and families with local resources outside of the justice system (Hodges, Martin, Smith, and Cooper, 2011). A major benefit from this program for youth and families is the connection with services within the neighborhood of the family.

Youth Assistance Programs are provided to families based on the location of the family. These services typically last for 3 months but can be extended for up to 6 months. The assistance program works with the youth and the parents to improve the youth's functioning in a wide array of life domains. The assessment utilized to determine the necessary youth assistance programs is called JIFF (Juvenile Inventory for Functioning). This assessment evaluates the risk

areas of a youth's life and the juvenile assessment center properly identifies the local youth assistance programs to assist the youth and their family (Hodges, Martin, Smith, and Cooper, 2011). At the close of the program, the JIFF is re-administered to the youth to evaluate how the assistance programs improved the risk areas.

As a result of this program, recidivism was reduced among participants. From 2007-2009, 1,017 were followed during a study. 7.7% reoffended within a year and 14 youth or 1.3% elevated their crime level from misdemeanor or status offense to a felony (Hodges, Martin, Smith, and Cooper, 2011).

The Post-Arrest Diversion Program, Florida

The Post-Arrest Diversion program utilizes standardized assessments to provide individual case plans, recommend adequate services, and effective case management to the youth voluntarily participating (Cocozza et al, 2005). This particular program is for referred first time, non-violent, misdemeanor youth offenders, ages 17 and younger. The intention of the program is to divert about 2,000 first-time offenders per year to community programs providing counseling, educational assistance, drug testing, and youth and family treatment (Cocozza et al, 2005).

The Post-Arrest Diversion (PAD) program is offered to youth following their arrest and arrival to the local juvenile detention facility. While the youth is detained in the juvenile detention facility, the staff will fingerprint and check the youth's criminal history. If the youth has no prior offenses and their current offense allows them to qualify for participation in PAD, then the juvenile detention staff will contact the parent/guardian. Upon the arrival of the parent/guardian, the youth and family are given information regarding the PAD. However, the program requires that the State's Attorney, arresting officer, and the victim agree to the terms of

diversion. Once there is an agreement and both the youth and parents/guardians sign the deferred prosecution agreement a thorough evaluation is given to the youth. As a result of this evaluation, a treatment and supervision plan is developed. During this process, the youth are given referrals to local counseling and other services necessary. Typically, the PAD program has a duration of 60 days but can be extended due to the required intervention services utilized (Cocozza et al, 2005).

As a result of this program, more youth have been able to be diverted and avoid the label of delinquent. Specifically, had approximately 75% of youth participating in the PAD successfully complete the program. The completion includes the sanctions and participation in programs. However, about 10% of the youth were re-arrested during their participation in the PAD (Cocozza et al, 2005).

SECTION IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research of juvenile diversion programs has been vigorously studied for quite some time and has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing recidivism for juveniles in addition to reducing the co-occurring disorders juveniles may face. Juvenile diversion programs have been recognized as a need by many. This recognition is based on the findings that traditional juvenile justice services are ineffective, detention and out of home placement is not cost effective, and the negative consequences that youth experience when the system fails to effectively separate delinquents from status offenders (Hodges et al, 2011). Although there are hundreds of juvenile diversion programs throughout the country, each program has negatives and positives.

Individual Assessments/Evaluations

Of the many components to juvenile diversion programs, the most essential portion is the usage of assessments to establish the risk areas of a youth's life in order to properly appoint and recommend other resources. It is fundamental for youth programs to utilize the assessments available to them. These assessments provide a grounding and base as to where the youth is currently. With the assessment, resources can be appointed to both the juvenile and their family to properly address the issues that are occurring within the life of the adolescent.

In particular, the Correct Course uses the JIFF (Juvenile Inventory for Functioning) assessment. This specific assessment is self-administered, computerized interview that produces an individual plan based on the needs of the youth. The needs are measured based on the responses by both the juvenile and their caregivers (Hodges et al, 2011). The needs of the youth are based on ten domains of functioning: school, picked on by peers, noncompliance in the home, family environment (reflects on undesirable behavior by others in the home, not the

youth), unsafe community behavior, feelings (trauma, depression, and anxiety), self-harm potential, thinking (irrational thoughts), substance use, and health-related concerns (Hodges et al, 2011). Upon completion of this assessment, individualized goals are produced centered around the answers given on behalf of the caregivers along with the adolescent; services are matched to each goal (Hodges et al, 2011).

Further, assessments can assist probation officers with effectively supervising the juveniles in their caseloads. Youth being supervised by the courts should be monitored according to their risk levels for reoffending. There are assessments such as the LS-CMI (Level of Service/Case Management Inventory) that are used to establish risk and need factors of youth and adult offenders. The LS-CMI examines 11 sections of an offender's life and produces a graph of risk areas based on the answers given by the offender. The eleven sections that are considered are: criminal history, education/employment, family/marital, leisure/recreation, companions, alcohol/drug problems, discharge summary, specific risk/needs factors, antisocial patterns, procriminal attitude orientation, barriers to release, case management plan, progress record, prison experience-institutional factors, and special responsivity consideration (Andrews et al, 2004). This assessment is given to offenders initially when they begin probation, six months into their probation term and annually thereafter (Andrews et al, 2004).

Family Incorporation

Families are one of the most important factors impacting youth and their future. As stated by Sutton et al, "a healthy home environment is the single most important factor in preventing delinquency" (Sutton, 2008, p. 9). Children learn their socialization through their families along with a number of other characteristics. Therefore, it is essential that families be

involved in the process of addressing the needs of youth. Family involvement is utilized by many programs. Specifically, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) are utilized.

Functional Family Therapy is a family-based prevention and intervention program. FFT stands as a good example of the current generation of family-based treatments for adolescent behavior problems. Therapy in this form has been applied in a variety of manners and has been successful (Sexton and Alexander, 2000). FFT can be utilized for a variety of ethnic and cultural groups and can also be applied for the younger siblings of the youth being referred (Sexton and Alexander, 2000). This form of therapy is short-term, but can be extended if necessary depending on the case at hand. There is flexibility in the program because of the structure and cultural sensitivity through clinical practice. The major emphasis of FFT is the importance of respecting all family members on their own terms (Sexton and Alexander, 2000). FFT has been found to be successful in its application to youth and their families. As stated by Sexton and Alexander, FFT reduces the recidivism and/or the onset of offending between 25 and 60 percent more effectively than other programs (Sexton and Alexander, 2000).

On the other hand, Multisystemic Therapy is a treatment geared for juvenile offenders that utilizes a combination of several empirically-based treatments (behavioral parent training, cognitive behavior therapy) to address multiple variables (family, school, peer groups) that have been shown to be factors in juvenile behavior (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2012). The goals of this therapy are to improve the youth's ability to make good decisions when choosing his/her peer group and the family's ability to monitor the youth's behavior (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2012). Therapists are assigned to caseloads and identify individual goals for each juvenile. These goals are ensured and monitored by the therapist. In cases where

goals are not met, the therapist works with the family, friends, school (teachers and principle) to remove obstacles keeping the juvenile from success (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2012).

Community Involvement/Remain in Community

As a result of diversion, juveniles are removed from secure facilities and allowed to be successful within the community. This is an important aspect to the turnaround of youth. As stated by Sutton, Gardner and Bugenhagen, “communities play an important role in providing a sound environment for individuals to develop” (2008, p. 10). The communities, in which youth reside, hold the resources they need to address their hardships.

Within communities, are the schools youth need to attend in order to complete their education. As stated in the section of juvenile detention facilities, upsetting the routine of school will hinder youth from continuing to attend. Juvenile probation workers in addition to the other parties involved are able to ensure that youth are attending school and addressing or working with the schools to guarantee the attendance and completion of school. Additionally, school gives youth a higher chance of making positive friendships rather than surrounding adolescents with deviant and less positive peers that they may meet while in secure detention facilities. Sutton, Gardner and Bugenhagen point out that academics are a key indicator for crime and delinquency; low academic aspirations and lack of commitment to school mark two of the school-based risk factors for delinquency.

Furthermore, the youth and their families can receive the skills necessary to build a more cohesive unit and to provide a more structural home for their child/children. The 180 Diversion Program in Waukesha County, WI incorporates the family into their curriculum. For fourteen

weeks, classes are held for both the youth and parents. These classes are held separately from one another yet incorporate an hour long interaction for the youth and family. The idea is that by including parents and requiring their involvement a much wider net is treated rather than just the young adult (Waukesha County, 2012).

Additionally, the youth participants are able to give back to the community they harmed by completing community service. A condition of diversion programs is the requirement to complete a number of community service hours. Community service provides youth with structure and a work ethic. In addition, youth are required to complete restorative justice in some capacity, whether it is restitution or victim impact. Youth offenders can be required to reimburse the victim directly through monetary funds for the crime they committed. Other times, the offender is required to discuss the impact of the crime from the victim's stand point. Restorative justice has been proven to reduce the recidivism of participants (Sutton et al, 2008).

Location of Programs

In order for a program to be successful and accomplish the goals set out, it needs to be accessible to the participants. The hours of operation and location of the program is a key component to the participation level. There are several factors that are important for reducing the level of recidivism; amount of service and the quality of service (Lipsey et al, 2010).

Youth and their families must receive a sufficient amount of the program service. According to Lipsey et al, the reduction of recidivism was associated with the duration of the service being offered and the total contact hours of service (2010). Meaning that the amount of days the juvenile is seen in addition to the duration of visits while assist in reducing the amount of recidivism on behalf of juvenile offenders. Additionally, the manner in which a program is implemented will also play into whether a juvenile reoffends. Lipsey et al point out a few factors

that would affect the implementation of a program. These factors include high dropout rates, staff turnover, poorly trained personnel, incomplete service delivery (Lipseley et al, 2010).

Programs also need to be mindful of how and where their programs are carried out. As a part of diversion, youth must attend programming that has been recommended and set out for them. Programming should be in an accessible location to the youthful offenders and their families to avoid any sort of deterrence. A benefit for programs is to have feasible hours, expectations and locations. For instance, FFT and MST are offered within the home. With these two forms of therapy, the therapist will come into the home and facilitate their agenda there. This is feasible for families, with the program coming to them they do not have to rush to the program or find care for the other siblings. This makes it virtually impossible for families and youth to avoid. Hodges et al highlight the importance of location. In their article, *Recidivism, Costs, and Psychological Outcomes for a Post-Arrest Juvenile Diversion Program*, identify how the Correct Course Diversion Program out of Wayne County, MI delivers their services. Correct Course delivers their services directly in the youth's neighborhood; families are assigned by zip code. The intention of this is to reduce the barrier of transportation and to enhance the cultural competence in the delivery of services (Hodges et al, 2011).

SECTION V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Young individuals face many different situations and environments they must learn to deal with effectively. Juveniles are an important population to understand and provide resources to because they hold our future in their hands. Therefore, society needs to observe that locking up youth offenders is not effective. Instead, diversion programs should be utilized in an attempt to save money and increase effectiveness for both youth and their families. Youth need to learn from their mistakes and be equipped with resources that will assist them in changing their point of view. The established research shows that juvenile diversion programs are effective in reducing recidivism and saving money for counties. Juvenile justice officials and government officials need to begin to change the manner in which juveniles are viewed and treated. The youth, as well as the families they come from, need to be given skills. Children are a product of their environment and can only be as successful as their environment allows them to be. Juvenile diversion programs can effectively manage the areas in which juveniles need assistance, such as school or home and allow them to be more successful. These programs realize that in order for change to happen families of these youth must also be involved.

The juvenile justice system is intended to be less formal and less imposing on youth offenders. In addition, the juvenile justice system attempts to allow youth offenders to learn from their mistakes and classify them as delinquents rather than criminals. However, being labeled a delinquent can still have lasting effects for youth, therefore diversion programs are able to give juveniles an opportunity to gain resources and insight to their actions without the court presence that can have a greater impact on juveniles. Diversion programs are able to give one-on-one interventions with juveniles and focus on their needs rather than focusing on general areas that may not have any impact on the juveniles. The key is that the juvenile system and

legislatures need to be aware of more effective options for youth offenders rather than locking them up to get tough on crime.

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