

Juvenile Corrections-Models, Methods, and Treatment Modalities Essential for Optimal
Operation of Juvenile Facilities, and Reduced Recidivism

Approved by: *Dr. Cheryl Banachowski-Fuller*

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Brett Ritz

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Abstract

Juvenile justice has evolved tremendously over many years in the United States. We have gone from a justice system that hardly recognized any differences between children and adults to a system that has clearly defined rules on how juveniles are treated. Although there has been a great deal of positive progress in the field of juvenile justice, there is still a great deal to do, specifically regarding the treatment of youth in custody. Across the country there are a wide range of methods used within secure facilities to manage and rehabilitate youth. Some are evidenced based practices that are highly effective, while other methods are outdated and ineffective. Some have been proven to cause harm and potentially increase delinquency. The purpose of this paper is to note the evolution of the juvenile justice system, identify ineffective methods, and highlight the methods that have data supporting their effectiveness. There are methods and models that have been heavily researched with solid evidence showing that, when put into practice, can significantly reduce juvenile recidivism rates. There are other methods/models still in practice causing harm and potentially perpetuating criminal behavior. Many of the youth in custody have a history of abuse, neglect, and have experienced more traumatic events than those not involved with the justice system. If we as a society truly want to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents and reduce crime rates, we will implement the proven methods and models while phasing out the ineffective models of the past.

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Over 100,000 juveniles are incarcerated in the United States every year (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Many of these young people have a history of trauma, behavioral issues, and mental illness. A poorly operated facility can exacerbate these existing problems and increase the chances of future criminal behavior, leading to increased recidivism (Hancock, 2017). The average recidivism rate for youth who experience incarceration is 85%, while youth who receive a community-based sanction have a much lower average recidivism rate of 56% (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Some facility-based programs that take a more therapeutic approach report much lower than average rates of recidivism. One such program is the Wisconsin based Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC), with a reported recidivism rate of 35% (Caldwell, Vitacco, & Rybroek, 2006). In comparison, MJTC's counterpart, the Lincoln Hills School, which used a non-therapeutic corrections-based model at the time of the study, had a recidivism rate of 75% (Caldwell, Vitacco, & Rybroek, 2006). Some professionals in the field of juvenile justice believe in a strict punishment correctional model. Many correctional models are set up to punish incarcerated individuals into being good citizens, but there is no evidence to support these outdated models. Research conducted to investigate how incarceration impacted juvenile development found no evidence to support the idea that the harsh punitive models used in many juvenile correctional settings promoted positive behavior in youth. The study indicated that there is no evidence that boot camps or other harsh correctional methods helped youth to become more responsible or develop better self-control (Dmitrieva et al., 2012).

Recent psychological research shows that the living environment weighs heavily on a youth's current and future behavior. The living environment and interpersonal relationships can have long lasting effects. Harsh punishments and lack of positive involvement have been linked to increased negative behavior and delinquency. Reoccurring stressors in the child's surroundings such as violence, and unstable relationships, may increase anti-social behavior in juveniles. In addition, children learn through observation- if those who are serving as role models are harsh, punitive, and hostile the juvenile may adopt these types of behaviors (McWhirter et al., 2017). Research indicates that approximately 90% of the children involved with the juvenile justice system have experienced a serious traumatic event, and approximately 30% of those suffer from- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Freeze, 2019). We must ask ourselves why, as a society, we would place troubled youth with a history of trauma into a harsh, punitive, stressful environment that will most likely increase their propensity for delinquent behavior, increase recidivism, and exacerbate emotional, and mental health issues. These types of outdated methods only seem to make matters worse and are a waste of tax dollars.

Recent research conducted in Florida juvenile justice facilities indicates that there are specific areas of programming in juvenile facilities that are directly linked to recidivism rates (Hancock, 2017). Additionally, location and facility size are aspects that can play a role in a youth's success. The Missouri Model is considered the gold standard regarding these two aspects. The Missouri Model ensures that youth remain close to home and keeps the youth population relatively small. This model helps youth remain connected to family, friends, and services. The smaller population allows for a safer, more manageable facility, and may help youth and staff build better rapport (Sawyer, 2019). There are examples of successful programs and strategies across the country, yet many jurisdictions continue to use an outdated and harsh correctional

model that only serves to remove youth from the community without any real effect of rehabilitation. There is a problem in the U.S. juvenile justice system when becoming incarcerated as a youth substantially increases one's chances of future criminal behavior and recidivism. If a youth is going to be locked up, they should be placed in a facility that has evidence-based programs that lead to decreased recidivism.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine aspects of facility operations and programming within secure juvenile facilities so we can identify those which have the greatest impact on recidivism. The research will focus primarily on incarcerated youth with a history of trauma, disruptive behavior, and mental illness. The research reviewed here suggests that the two primary areas within a facility that have the greatest influence on rehabilitation and positive response are security and healthcare. The evidence shows that an incarcerated youth must feel safe and have their basic healthcare needs met before other aspects of treatment can be effective. When a youth feels safe and is in good health, they can take the risks necessary to make changes. They are in a better position to work on their education and participate more effectively in their mental health treatment. These are the two key factors that seem to play a part in their future success (Hancock, 2017).

Significance and Implications of the Study

This research is significant because there is a prevailing body of evidence that shows youthful offenders are different from their adult counterparts and programs that treat juveniles like adults make things worse. Many youthful offenders have experienced significant traumas. It is known that adverse childhood events such as trauma have an effect on the developing body including areas of the brain. Researchers in the field of neurobiology have shown that there is a significant difference between the adolescent brain and the fully developed adult brain. Furthermore, multiple studies have revealed that psycho-social maturity occurs much later than previously thought. Psycho-social maturity does not completely occur until a person is in their mid-to late-twenties (Steinberg & Scott, 2003) If we recognize these differences, stop using adult correctional methods and implement evidence-based practices within secure juvenile facilities we may be able to reduce the negative impacts of trauma, treat emerging mental illnesses, and manage behavioral issues associated with criminal activity. Understanding and addressing the root causes of dangerous criminal behavior in juveniles may prove useful in rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. This study will argue that incarcerated juvenile offenders should be provided programming aimed at treating the root causes of the behavioral issues that led to their incarceration. This study will also argue that there are specific aspects of facility operations and programming that need to be understood for a rehabilitation model to be successful. Providing useful information regarding models of treatment that are associated with reduced recidivism may help create conversations that lead to improvements within juvenile correctional facilities.

Methods of Approach

The method of approach for this paper will be secondary research and empirical evidence primarily from the fields of psychology, neurobiology, and criminal justice. The information will be gathered from journals, internet sources, and other scholarly sources regarding the effects of juvenile facility operations and programming, and their effects on recidivism rates.

Contribution to the Field

The U.S. juvenile justice system is a patchwork of state and county systems, with very little consistency regarding what constitutes best practices for decreasing recidivism amongst incarcerated youth. The contribution of this research will be to lay out the fundamental areas of facility operations and programming that are most important to decreasing recidivism.

Literature Review

The juvenile justice system in the United States has undergone a tremendous amount of growth and reform over the years. A review of current literature and the historical record show slow but consistent improvements in how we treat juveniles within the criminal justice system. Much of the change has occurred slowly, over many decades. There have been several factors driving this progress including changing cultural and societal norms, court rulings, advances in science that have allowed us to better understand human behavior, and advances that have improved intervention techniques. Research in psychology and neurobiology have generated a wealth of knowledge that has been beneficial to many fields, including criminal justice. Scientific research has allowed us to better understand the world around us, and this knowledge has led to shifts in cultural and societal norms. Many common practices of the past appear inhumane when viewed through the modern lens. Increasing knowledge gained through research

has led to positive changes, as well as more ethical and humane practices. The field of criminal justice is no different than other fields of study in that many changes have taken place due to a fusion of scientific knowledge and cultural shifts. It is important to understand that through research and a better understanding of human behavior, we have developed more ethical and rational methods to deal with adolescent criminal behavior. To grasp how far juvenile justice has evolved, we must look at the past. In so doing, it will help us to understand the present and devise strategies for future progress.

Research Definitions

This portion of the literature review is presented to clearly define frequently used key terms within this paper. The terms presented are not an exhaustive list of all terms used, but those that establish the framework of the study.

Juvenile is defined as an individual who is being held accountable within the juvenile court system due to their age when they were alleged to have broken the law. Generally, individuals under the age of 18 (Schmallegger, 2017).

Juvenile Justice The laws, policies and procedures carried out by the courts and agencies charged with enforcing the law as it applies to violations of the law by youth, generally when under they were under the age of 18 (Schmallegger, 2017).

Juvenile Delinquent A youth who has taken part in activities that would be considered criminal if they were over the age of 18 (Schmallegger, 2017).

Recidivism Within the criminal justice system recidivism is when an individual who already has a criminal record commits additional illegal acts resulting in rearrest, reconviction, and being reincarcerated (Schmallegger, 2017).

Rehabilitation When steps are taken in an attempt transform the criminal into a law-abiding citizen (Schmallegger, 2017).

Psychosocial The American Psychological Association defines psychosocial as the intersection and interaction of social, cultural, and environmental factors on the mind and behavior of the individual (APA,2021).

Neurobiology Is defined as the biological study of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system (APA, 2021).

Criminal Behavior refers to conduct of an individual that leads to an illegal act (US Legal, 2021).

Adverse Childhood Event (ACE) are events that occur during childhood that are potentially traumatic. These events can have detrimental effects on a person's physical health, mental health, overall wellbeing, and stability throughout their life (Scarlett, 2021).

Incarceration the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines incarceration as “the act of imprisoning someone or the state of being imprisoned” (Merriam, 2021)

Trauma-informed Care Trauma-informed care is a type of treatment that recognizes and responds to the signs, symptoms, and risks of trauma to support the health needs of individuals who have experienced, traumatic events, Adverse Childhood Events, and extreme reoccurring stress (ACE Aware, 2021).

Decompression is described as “Clinical programming designed to gradually lift the individual out of the compressed cycle of extensive discipline or overcontrolled security measures and back to the general population in a manner similar to that used for divers rising from the ocean depths” (Caldwell et al., 2001).

Evolution of Juvenile Justice

Early in the U.S. justice system, juveniles were treated like small adults, with no real regard for their lack of life experience or physical development (Schmallegger, 2017). Through the 1800s and up until the mid-1900s, children could be incarcerated and housed with adults in many jurisdictions. Prior to the landmark Supreme Court cases *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), and *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) juveniles were subject to capital punishment and life in prison without parole.

The U.S. juvenile justice system has seen a number of reform movements dating back to the early 1800s. In the late 1800s, Massachusetts and New York created separate juvenile court systems, separating children from adults. In the early 1800s the city of New York established “Houses of Refuge”. They were created to help children living on the streets, and those who were resorting to crime to survive in their harsh environment. Children involved in serious criminal activity could still be placed in adult facilities alongside hardened criminals. Towards the end of the 1800s a few states started to recognize that juveniles should be separated from the adult system, and their cases handled in a manner that was more appropriate for their age. The

state of New York was the first state to separate juvenile and adult inmates in the 1870s. In 1899, the state of Illinois established what would become the model of juvenile justice for the rest of the United States. The most important change within the Illinois model was the philosophy of always having the best interest of the juvenile as the primary focus. Previously, the juvenile justice system across the land was focused on deterrence, punishment, and retribution- with little regard for the wellbeing of the child (Schmallegger, 2017). In the 1930s, the federal government established juvenile justice laws that closely resembled the Illinois system. It wasn't until the mid to late 1940s that the rest of the United States followed suit and established similar laws with separate juvenile justice systems. Even with separate judicial systems established, many states continued to house juveniles in facilities with adult inmates, as was previously stated, juveniles were subject to the death penalty up into the early 2000s. In recent times reform of the juvenile justice system has been prompted by scientific research of human behavior and brain development stemming from the fields of psychology and neurobiology. In both *Roper v. Simmons* and *Miller v. Alabama*, the American Psychological Association presented information to the Supreme Court that weighed heavily on the outcomes of each case. The growing body of evidence indicating that juvenile brain development, psycho-social capabilities, impulse control, and decision-making abilities are not the same as adults bolstered the argument that children displaying criminal behavior need to be treated differently than adult criminals.

The neuro-biological and psychological research of human maturity levels, reasoning, and impulse control spearheaded major shifts in how juveniles are dealt with in the court system, as well as how they should be treated within the correctional setting. In the 2005 Supreme Court case *Roper v. Simmons* the APA argued that those under the age of majority have not reached full adult maturity, and because they are still developing biologically and psychologically, they

do not have the capacity to always make good decisions especially under pressure. The APA continued to argue that during adolescence the personality is still forming, and during this time juveniles lack the ability to consistently make sound decisions. In addition, juveniles are lacking a fully mature neuro-biological system, because of these factors juveniles have a diminished level of responsibility for their actions. The APA concluded their evidenced based argument that juveniles do not meet the minimum standard established by the Supreme Court for the death penalty (APA, 2004). Juveniles as a segment of our society do not possess the same psychosocial skills or impulse control as the average mature adult. Due to the glaring differences between juveniles and adults applying the death penalty to an individual under the age of majority runs contrary to the Supreme Court's rationale for using it (APA, 2004). The established and accepted rationale for the death penalty is that it is for criminals who can no longer be rehabilitated. The evidence clearly shows that juveniles are still maturing and have the ability to be rehabilitated (APA,2004). The APA supported their argument with evidence provided by renowned researcher Laurence Steinberg and his colleagues. The Steinberg article *Less Guilty by Reason of Adolescence-Development Immaturity, Diminished Responsibility, and the Juvenile Death Penalty* provided a substantial amount of information that the APA used in their argument. The data derived from this 2003 study indicates that an individual's personality is still in its formative stage during the teenage years, and most likely isn't solidified until their mid-twenties. The research also indicated that risky or criminal behavior is more prevalent during young adulthood and the teenage years. The research showed that for the majority of people risky, impulsive, and criminal behavior declined with age. The APA also pointed out that given the same circumstances these same people would make different decisions as older more mature individuals (APA, 2004). More recent research continues to support this original argument. It is

now a very well-established fact that criminal behavior peaks in the teens and early twenties, then declines as individuals move into their late twenties and thirties (Shulman et al., 2013).

Seven years later in 2012 the APA once again provided the Supreme Court information by way of an amicus brief about juvenile psychosocial maturity and brain development. This time the court was hearing the *Miller v. Simmons* case and deciding if juveniles could be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Similar information was provided by the APA. They presented solid evidence clearly showing that the juvenile neurobiological system and psychosocial maturity were not fully developed. They clearly presented the fact that juveniles and adults are significantly different when comparing brain development, decision making, and impulse control. Due to their lack of biological and psychological development juveniles should not be held to the same standard as adults. The APA added that a teenager's character is not fully developed, psychological traits are not firmly established, and because of this can be rehabilitated (APA,2012). The APA stated that these factors do not mean a juvenile should not be held accountable for their criminal behavior, but their maturity factors should be taken into account, and juveniles should be prohibited from being sentenced to life without parole. This information had a significant impact on the Supreme court decision and helped change the course of juvenile justice.

Both *Roper v. Simmons* and *Miller v. Alabama* had significant impacts on the U.S. criminal justice system and helped to highlight the growing body of evidence indicating major differences between the juvenile delinquent and adult criminal. The information presented by the APA clearly shows us that juveniles within the criminal justice system should not be treated like adults, and that they actually have a greater capacity for rehabilitation. If the Supreme court can be swayed by this mountain of evidence, so should the state agencies working with juveniles

within their justice systems. A few key points are that the juvenile justice system should always have the best interest of the child as the primary objective, juveniles do not have the same psychosocial capacities as adults but have a greater capacity for rehabilitation, and recidivism reduces if they are in the right environment and given a chance.

Adverse Childhood Events and Their Detrimental Effects

In the late 1990's a groundbreaking study was conducted that investigated how adverse childhood events affected individuals. The study was titled the *Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults-The Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) Study*. The study investigated the link between adverse events during childhood and mental health issues, physical health ailments, and social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse. The study found a strong link between those who experience adverse childhood events and the development of mental health, medical, and social problems later in life. Adverse childhood events include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, witnessing violence directed towards the mother, substance abuse in household, household mental illness, household member incarcerated, and parental separation or divorce. As time has gone on additional factors have been added, including discrimination, witnessed violence, unsafe neighborhood, racism, and poverty (Freeze, 2019). The research indicates that individuals who experience ACE's will suffer from multiple issues as time progresses (Felitti et al., 1998). The evidence indicates that a juvenile's environment will have immediate and long-lasting effects on their future behavior. Severe punishments, uninvolved parents, lack of stability, and lack of positive nurturing are all linked to juvenile delinquency. Repeated exposure to extreme stressors such as violence in the home, divorce, and unstable

parental figures can have detrimental effects on children living in these types of environments and is linked to anti-social behavior. There is new research linking delinquent behavior to neurobiological development and social-environmental factors (Focquaert, 2019). Chronic stress and traumatic events may negatively affect a juvenile's biological development. Chronic stress in juvenile's living environment along with exposure to traumatic events may have a negative impact on the parts of the brain that would normally help an individual control their emotions and impulses. This stunted or altered brain development may increase the likelihood of criminal behavior in some individuals.

A study conducted by the National Institute of Justice supports this link between ACE's and delinquency. The study showed that abused and neglected juveniles are 59% more likely to be arrested before the age of 18, and criminal behavior in adulthood increases by 28%. In addition, the likelihood of committing a violent crime increases by 30% (Kochly, 2016). Additional research shows that nearly 90% of the youth involved in the juvenile justice system have experienced a traumatic event, and 30% suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Freeze, 2019). Current research shows that most juveniles displaying delinquent behavior have altered brain function, brain anatomy, and hormone levels (Focquaert, 2019). Research within criminology and neurobiology indicates that there are biological factors linked to criminal behavior. The biological factors include altered hormone levels, stunted amygdala development, and abnormal frontal lobe function (Focquaert, 2019). The evidence indicates that criminal behavior displayed by some individuals may be a symptom of a damaged brain. To further complicate matters, researchers now believe that childhood stress and adverse events may have different impacts on the developing child depending upon the age that the individual experiences these negative events (Herzog & Schmahl, 2018). The research indicates that stress and

traumatic events can cause something similar to a brain injury, making it difficult for some to effectively navigate their social environment. It must be clearly stated that not everyone who has these types of negative experiences in life is going to display criminal behavior, but having a traumatic, stressful childhood may affect other aspects of an individual's life and make it more difficult to succeed. The ACE study was incredibly important because it helped increase understanding of how damaging traumatic events in childhood can be, and how these events can affect an individual's social, emotional and physical well-being (Hickner, 2018). Overall, the ACE study and subsequent research has been very helpful to many fields of study and has shed light on multiple factors that affect human behavior. This field of research and ever-expanding body of knowledge may hold the keys to prevention, early interventions, and new ways of rehabilitating those displaying dangerous criminal behaviors. Armed with this information, those working in the field of juvenile justice can look at ways to heal and neutralize the damaging effects of adverse childhood events. This type of approach may decrease recidivism and have long lasting positive effects at both the individual and societal level.

Neurobiology, the Developing Mind, and Juvenile Criminal Behavior

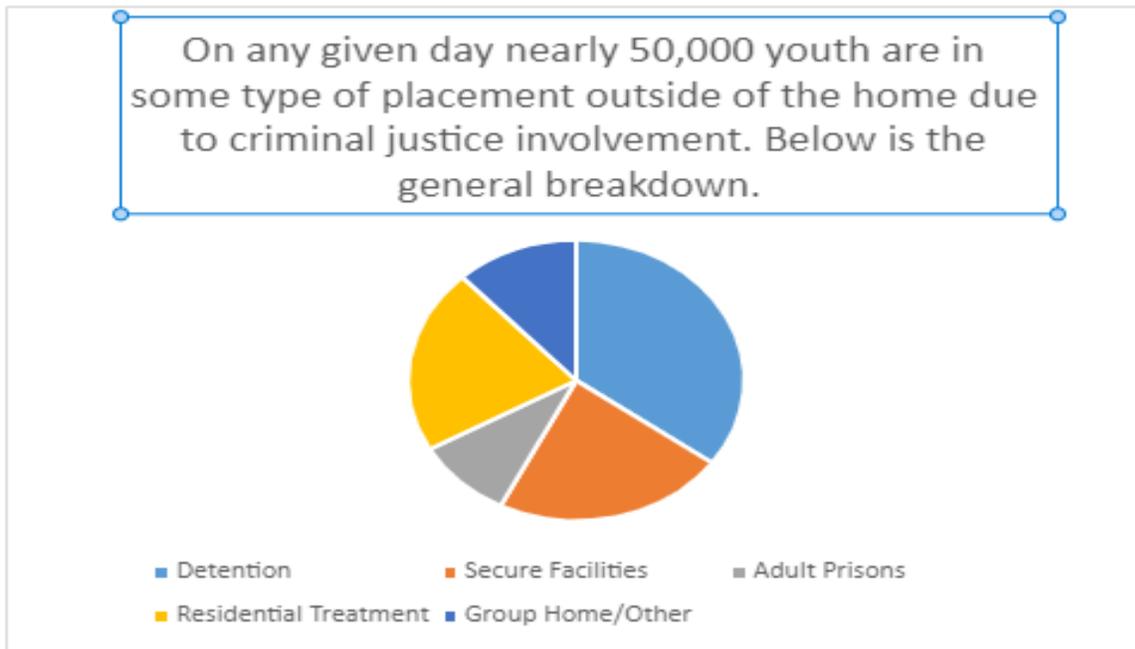
In recent years the fields of psychology, neurobiology, and criminal justice have intersected. What has emerged is a growing body of evidence that has helped us to better understand how brain development, psychosocial maturity, and criminal behavior are interrelated. Some of the basic facts that have been established from this cross section of academic research is that males are more likely to display violent behavior. Likewise, criminal behavior starts to increase after the age of 10, peaks at around 17, and then starts to decline in the

20s (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2019). In addition, it has been established that the adolescent brain is different than the adult brain, and that cognitive maturity and psychosocial maturity occur at different periods of human maturation (Icenogle et al., 2019). In the article “*Adolescents’ Cognitive Capacity Reaches Adult Levels Prior to Their Psychosocial Maturity: Evidence for “Maturity Gap” in a Multinational Cross –Sectional Sample.*” Renowned researcher Laurence Steinberg and his associates present information establishing the fact that individuals' cognitive abilities plateau in the late teen years, but the psychosocial maturation process continues into the mid- to late- twenties. What the data indicates is that teenagers around the age of 16 develop the ability to make deliberate, logical decisions when there's no external stressors such as peer pressure, time constraints, or emotional arousal (Icenogle et al., 2019). This multinational study clearly showed that there is a definite gap in cognitive and psychosocial maturation with adults in their mid- to late- twenties being much more capable of sound decisions even with time limits, social pressure, or emotional arousal. The teenager could make good decisions in a calm stress-free environment, but that ability diminished when the above-mentioned stress factors were introduced (Icenogle et al., 2019). The vast difference in decision making skills between teenagers and adults in this study makes clear the link between age and psychosocial maturity. This study adds solid evidence and support to Supreme Court decisions in *Roper v. Simmons*, and *Miller v. Alabama*, finding that juveniles are less culpable due to diminished psychosocial maturation. This information has been pivotal in the highest court but can also be important for those working with incarcerated youth.

Facility Operations and Recidivism

Incarcerating juveniles is a hotly debated topic, with strong opinions from many sectors. Many of the traditional correctional methods are viewed as outdated, and counterproductive to rehabilitation. Numerous states have been sued for civil rights abuses due to their use of solitary confinement and other harsh methods (NJDC, 2021). The question is, when we incarcerate juveniles what are we trying to achieve, and what are the best methods? Should a juvenile's incarceration just serve as a time-out from society, or should we be trying to rehabilitate them and reduce their propensity for criminal behavior? Those who have looked at the data know that once a juvenile is incarcerated, especially in the traditional correctional setting, their chance for future incarceration increases drastically (*Snyder & Sickmund, 2006*). Incarceration is costly, so it only makes sense that if we incarcerate someone, we should use that time to rehabilitate them and reduce their chances of recidivism. Otherwise, there is a good chance that a person will continue to commit crime, return to prison, and continue to be a financial burden on society. Beyond the financial cost, criminal acts can have significant costly ripple effects throughout society. Every time there is a violent criminal act such as rape or murder, many people are affected and there are long-term, far-reaching consequences. There is a need to examine the system and implement evidence-based practices to reduce recidivism rates. Simply incarcerating juveniles for a period of time and not having rehabilitation as the primary goal is counterproductive. One does not have to look far to find programs and methods that are evidence-based with data showing they reduce recidivism. In a recent article titled *Facility Operations and Juvenile Recidivism*, author Katy Hancock presents research that can be implemented in juvenile corrections to reduce recidivism rates. Thousands of juveniles get caught up in the juvenile justice system every year, and approximately 35%- roughly 110,000- of

the youth will end up spending time in some type of facility (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). More recent data from the Prison Policy Initiative is presented in the information below.



Detention-17,585 Secure Facilities-10,777 Adult Prisons/Jails-4535 Residential Treatment-10,256 Group Homes-3375 Other-2450

Note: Graph and data adapted from Prison Policy Initiative-Youth Confinement: The Whole Pie 2019.

The data indicates that once incarcerated, the chance of future incarceration increases. Data from the early 2000’s indicated that approximately 85% of the youth who end up in a facility will go on to commit crime after release (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Only 39 states track juvenile recidivism rates, so the current information may not be completely accurate. The data that is available indicates that up to 80% of youth with arrest records will be re-arrested within three years and one study indicates that approximately 40% of those youth will be incarcerated in an adult prison before the age of 25 (Care, 2018).

Researcher Katy Hancock investigated the connection between juvenile facility operations and recidivism. Hancock looked at multiple vital areas of operations within facilities to help determine what aspects were most important to create an environment where youth could be

rehabilitated. Hancock found that there are critical areas that are associated with recidivism. The key areas include security, healthcare, program management, admissions/classification, mental health, substance abuse treatment, programming, intervention management, and food service. The two areas that proved to have the biggest influence on recidivism were security and healthcare (Hancock, 2017). Security is important because if a youth does not feel safe it's very difficult to focus on therapy, school, or other programming. If the environment is unsafe, filled with violence, and criminal behavior the youth will learn additional criminal behavior. Lack of safety and security will create a stressful environment, ripe for further criminal behavior. In addition, if a youth is consistently exposed to violence and traumatic events, they may become hyper vigilant, leading to PTSD or other mental health problems. An unsafe environment will make it very difficult for the youth to engage in positive behavior, and practice doing the right thing. Healthcare is essential because once again it can be very difficult to focus on therapy, school, or other rehabilitative programming if you don't feel well (Hancock, 2017). Imagine trying to solve a math problem or write an essay with a throbbing toothache, and worried that someone is going to assault you. Basically, the juvenile needs to be healthy and feel safe for all the other components of a rehab program to be meaningful. This research points out the importance of basic needs. When a juvenile feels safe and is healthy, they can focus on improving themselves.

The Missouri Model

The Missouri Model was developed in the state of Missouri over several decades with initial changes starting in the 1970's and evolving up through the early 2000's. The basic

structure of this model is based on maintaining numerous small facilities throughout the state. This approach keeps the population at each site relatively small and allows youth to remain close to their home. Within their facilities the youth are highly supervised and entered into a structured treatment programming. The youth are continuously given individualized attention. This model avoids using traditional correctional methods of coercion such as locked isolation, pepper spray, or long-term use of mechanical restraints. A key point that those administering the Missouri model focus on is consistently maintaining a safe and secure environment free of violence or other forms bullying (Mendel, 2010). The Missouri model has been able to reduce recidivism and stands as a model for other states to follow.

Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center

The Mendota Juvenile Treatment (MJTC) program was opened in 1995, on the grounds of the Mendota Mental Health Institute, in Madison, Wisconsin. MJTC was created to manage youth in custody with behavioral and mental health issues. All of the youth come from the Lincoln Hills School the Wisconsin Department of Juvenile Corrections facility for incarcerated youth. MJTC is operated by the Department of Health services and contracted by the DJC. The Mendota program was created by mental health professionals, who took a different approach than the traditional corrections model. The developers placed an emphasis on behavioral programming and developed methods to help juveniles engage in positive programming. The MJTC program has had significant amounts of research conducted on their methods and results. A study conducted over several years and published in 2006 provided evidence of significantly reduced recidivism rates. The study followed a group of youth who had completed programming

at MJTC and a similar group of youth who had only been housed at the state's juvenile correctional facility. The study showed a 75% recidivism rate for the corrections youth and a 35% recidivism rate for the MJTC youth over a 4.5-year period (Caldwell, Vitacco, & Rybroek, 2006).

Lincoln Hills School

The Lincoln Hills School is a locked facility for juveniles operated by the Wisconsin Department of Juvenile Corrections. It was opened in 1970 and serves as the primary secure locked facility for juvenile males in the state (LHS, 2021). For most of its history LHS operated using the traditional corrections model. Their methods resembled many of those used in adult corrections. They used long term isolation/confinement, prolonged use of mechanical restraints, pepper spray and brute force to maintain control of the environment. In 2016 the Department of Justice initiated an investigation into activities at the facility. In 2017 a lawsuit was filed by the ACLU stemming from multiple allegations of abuse and harsh conditions within the facility (MJS, 2021).

It can be seen that there are programs and methods that are evidenced based with proven results that are beneficial to juveniles caught up in the justice system. There continue to be outdated programs and methods used by various departments who are resistant to change. Jurisdictions that continue to use outdated methods risk potential lawsuits and are doing a disservice to the youth as well as to society.

The next section will review the theoretical frameworks that guide and inform successful programs. The theories reviewed will be Social Control Theory, Bonding Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Defiance Theory.

Theoretical Frameworks that Guide and Inform Successful Programs

In this section we will explore prominent psychological and criminological theories that are used to explain why juveniles commit crime and information that can help inform successful juvenile programs. If the individuals managing juvenile facilities have a good understanding of the following theories, they can use this knowledge to increase the effectiveness of their programs. We will explore which factors are needed to prevent criminal behavior and those components that need to be implemented in order to decrease recidivism rates. In previous sections we explored biological factors that influence and may predispose individuals to criminal behavior. In this section we look at the social and environmental factors that potentially influence delinquent behavior. We know that an individual is neither purely a product of their biology or their social environment- instead, it is the combination of both factors which shape the personality, resulting behaviors, and their traits displayed throughout life. There are several theories that help us to understand deviant behavior, and understanding is important for those attempting to solve the problem. The primary theories include Social Control Theory, Social Learning Theory, Defiance Theory, and- the cornerstone of western criminal justice- Beccaria's Deterrence Theory. Control Theory primarily explores why some people do not commit crime even when the opportunity for illegal personal gain presents itself. Social Learning Theory looks at how individuals learn from those around them. In the context of criminal behavior, if an individual sees others benefiting from crime, they may adopt these types of behaviors. The third theory explored is Defiance Theory, which takes into account sanctions, their effectiveness, and what factors make these sanctions either effective or ineffective. The last theory is the well-established Theory of Deterrence, which states that the punishment should fit the crime.

Social Control Theory

Social Control Theories are also known as bonding theories. There are several ideas behind control or bonding theories but the most prominent and useful for juvenile justice and the purpose of this paper comes from Hirschi's Social Control Theory. Noted sociologist and criminologist Travis Hirschi introduced his Social Control Theory in 1969. Hirschi believed that the bond between an individual and the society in which they lived was the primary component of Social Control Theory. The general premise of Hirschi's theory is that the more involved and connected to society a person is, the more likely they are to follow the accepted societal rules (Hirschi, 2017). Hirschi named four primary factors to the bond which include attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Attachments refer to emotional connections to important people in an individual's life. The second aspect of the theory is an individual's commitment to making acceptable lifestyle choices, because they have goals that coincide with mainstream society. Involvement speaks to how immersed an individual is in accepted societal values and beliefs. The last aspect of Hirschi's theory is belief (Hirschi, 2017). Does the individual believe that it is important to follow societal rules, is there a sense of obligation? Hirschi believed that if the components of the bond were strong the likelihood of an individual committing a crime was low. As the bonds get weaker the likelihood of criminal behavior increases. The more connected and involved a person is with others within society the more likely they are to accept, believe in, and support the society in which they live. If these factors are missing, an individual may not feel obligated to follow the established rules of the society in which they live (Hirschi, 2017). From a juvenile justice perspective, it is important for us to look at these aspects and ask if the youth within our system have attachments to positive role models. What is the level of commitment?

Are these youth involved in positive aspects of society? If not, these juveniles are going to have a hard time believing in the legitimacy of the rules of society. Youth facilities and programs can use aspects of this theory to help in the rehabilitation process. This theory helps to explain why juveniles may take part in delinquent behavior and how we might get them on the right path. First and foremost, it seems incredibly important that staff build positive relationships with the youth in their care. Once a positive healthy relationship is established the other three factors can start to grow. The idea is that the more connections a juvenile has the less likely they are to do things to let the people they are connected to down. Aspects of Hirsch's theory are evident in both the Missouri model and the MJTC program.

Social Learning Theory

The basis of the Social Learning Theory is that individuals learn by observing the actions of others. The well-known psychologist Alfred Bandura showed, through experiments and research, that a large amount of an individual's learning takes place purely through observation. He demonstrated that individuals, especially children, learn by watching. There doesn't always have to be reward, punishment, or some form of conditioning for an individual to learn and then display behavior (Bandura et al., 1961). Bandura explained that in many cases children learn through mimicking the behaviors they observe. Bandura demonstrated that observation and mimicking are important aspects of the learning process, especially for children. Bandura showed that what children observe weighs heavily on how they learn to interact and behave (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2019). The notable Bobo doll experiment conducted by Bandura studied how children would act towards blow-up plastic dolls. One group observed adults acting aggressively towards the dolls while the other group had no prior observation. Both groups were then put in a room with a Bobo doll. The children who observed adults acting aggressively

towards the doll consistently displayed a higher propensity for aggressive behavior towards the doll (Bandura et al., 1961). This simple experiment and findings help us to understand that role modeling can have a significant impact on the behavior of juveniles. This information can help those working with juveniles understand why some juveniles display certain behaviors and the importance that role modeling good behavior can have on others, especially children. At the juvenile facility level, those who are involved with programming and day-to-day operations need to understand that if they rely on harsh punitive methods or brute force this is what the youth are learning and there is a good chance that they will display this type of behavior.

Defiance Theory

In 1993, renowned criminologist Lawrence Sherman presented his article titled *Defiance, Deterrence, and Irrelevance: A Theory of the Criminal Sanction*. In this article Sherman presents his theory pertaining to punishment and its effect on criminal behavior. What Sherman found was that punishment did not always have the desired effect. While punishment in the criminal justice system can sometimes reduce criminal behavior, sometimes it actually increases it, and other times it may have no effect either way (SHERMAN, 1993). Sherman explained that there are multiple factors that can affect the results of punishment. They include the type of criminal, the type of crime, the social environment, and the level of analysis (SHERMAN, 1993). Sherman's Defiance Theory helps to explain under what conditions punishment increases criminal behavior. Sherman explains that when a punishment/legal sanction is seen as unfair by a group or individual defiance may grow due to the feelings of being treated unjustly. For punishment to be effective the justice system needs to be viewed as legitimate. Sherman points out that when a system is unfair and doesn't display a basic level of respect it may lose

legitimacy in the eyes of some, and this can lead to defiance and increased criminal behavior (SHERMAN, 1993). Without legitimacy there is no real shame in being punished by the governing system and may be seen as a badge of honor by some. Sherman makes the point that the government might be able to reduce crime by having police and the courts treat all people fairly and with respect. He states this might work better than increasing the level of punishment (SHERMAN, 1993).

Theory of Deterrence

The founder of classical criminology is Cesare Beccaria. Although his writings are from the 1700's they are still relevant today and have been influential for centuries. Beccaria's Theory of Deterrence is what much of the western world's criminal justice system is based upon. His classic essay entitled *On Crimes and Punishments* details his views on the rights and responsibilities of governments as it pertains to punishment and the good of society. Beccaria believed that for punishment to deter crime, the punishment should be fair and equal to the crime. The punishment should not be excessive or more detrimental than the actual crime itself (Beccaria, 1985). Beccaria stated that excessive, harsh punishment that did not reflect the actual crime was not beneficial to society and did not act as an effective deterrent. In addition, Beccaria believed that justice should be carried out in a timely fashion (Beccaria, 1985). Many of his philosophies are imbedded in our current criminal justice system and have influenced modern views on criminal justice. Two basic ideas derived from Beccaria theory of deterrence that are as relevant today as they were when they were written are the idea of fairness and timeliness. Both of these points should be remembered today, especially by those working in the juvenile justice system. This early theory has had a long-lasting impact on western society's criminal justice

system (Schmallegger, 2017). We should continue with Beccaria's practice of critical thought and reform of the justice system when it is called for (Schmallegger, 2017).

In the next section juvenile corrections programs will be evaluated. In addition, three different models will be compared, weaknesses, and strong points will be examined and discussed.

Program Evaluation: Compare and Contrast Effective vs. Ineffective Programs

In this section we will look at the three previously mentioned programs to compare and contrast methods, guiding principles and overall program effectiveness. By no means are the Missouri model, MJTC, and the Lincoln Hills school the only examples that could have been reviewed, but they help to show the wide range of philosophies, methods, and ideas that are practiced in the United States juvenile justice system. An underlying theme within this paper is that the system has evolved over time- what was acceptable in the past may not be today, and just because this is the way we've always done it doesn't make it acceptable or the best practice. The programs that have the data clearly showing reduced recidivism rates have used scientific research and data to guide them. They have shifted away from outdated methods and have moved towards evidence-based practices that have data to support their effectiveness in rehabilitation and crime reduction. The successful programs use a multifaceted approach that includes a wide array of methods and ideas. Things such as geographical location, structural layout, bed capacity, staffing levels, types of staff, treatment modalities, and organizational culture can all have an effect on treating the root cause of the delinquent behavior and ultimately reducing recidivism. Well known researcher in the field of juvenile justice, Barry Feld, has stated that the traditional model of juvenile corrections is ineffective. Feld and numerous other

researchers have looked at the data and have concluded that the traditional model of incarcerating high numbers of juveniles in a harsh, punitive environment does not rehabilitate or reduce recidivism and in many cases, actually harms the individuals incarcerated in these programs (Feld,1999). When spending tax dollars on incarceration, we should put our resources into programs that reduce crime- not perpetuate or increase it. As you will see in the following sections, there are well established programs that have the data to support their recidivism reducing methods.

The Missouri Model: A Case Study of Reform

The Missouri Model was born out of cries for change, federal investigations, and eventually state level mandates that brought about reform. At one point in the late 1930's the Missouri juvenile corrections system was considered one of the worst in the nation (Missouri DYS, 2018). In the late 1960's the federal government released a report condemning the conditions and methods at Missouri's Reform School for Boys in Boonville. It took over three decades after being labeled one of the worst systems in the country before state mandated reforms were initiated. While it took many years for reform to occur, the changes brought about one of the most highly regarded models in the country. The reforms started in the 1970's with incremental changes and improvements occurring over many years. Shifts in philosophy occurred with the primary goal of rehabilitation replacing the old model of harsh punishment (Missouri DYS, 2018). This state mandated philosophical shift was essential for the other reforms to occur. Along with the philosophical changes, fundamental infrastructure changes occurred. Missouri went from a system made up of large capacity, punishment-based reform schools that warehoused hundreds of juveniles, to multiple smaller facilities with the overriding

goal of rehabilitating the youth (Missouri DYS, 2018). Missouri currently operates 32 residential facilities across the state. These two aspects- smaller facilities and the overriding goal of rehabilitation- made it possible for all the other pieces to come together. Another unique aspect of the Missouri Model is that the system is watched over by an advisory board. The board is made up of former legislators, judges, community leaders, and others with various backgrounds, from all regions of the state. The board brings new ideas to the table, assists with problem solving, and adds a level of oversight. The board holds those working within the system accountable (Missouri DYS, 2018). Embracing the philosophy of accountability, improvement, and innovation has helped the Missouri model to continually evolve.

As previously mentioned, the Missouri model uses small, residential-like facilities that are strategically located around the state so that when a youth is placed under the supervision of the state they are never far from home. This makes it much easier for family members and those who will be working with the youth post-release to visit and stay connected. The Missouri Model has well established diversion programs that attempt to keep the youth from being incarcerated or moving further into the justice system (Missouri DYS, 2018). The system has a built-in level of efficiency with the diversion programs and facilities being managed by the same state entity- the Division of Youth Services, or DYS. Many state systems are disjointed with communication breakdowns between different agencies. The Missouri system continuously works towards getting the youth back on the right path, with the goal of reducing recidivism while the youth are in the community, in custody, or transitioning back home. This continuity of care is incredibly important for the overall success of the juvenile.

When in custody and residing within a state-run facility, the Missouri youth will have a much different experience than youth in other states. The program strives to create a therapeutic

home-like environment. The facilities have regular home like furniture instead of secure corrections type furniture. The youth are allowed to have regular bedding like comforters and regular pillows instead of the corrections style bedding. In addition, some youth are allowed to have pets such as dogs, cats, or fish (Missouri DYS, 2018). During a regular weekday, the youth go to school, receive vocational/job training, and attend recreational activities. Counseling is offered in several formats to include individual, group, and family therapy. The youth are placed in groups of 10-12 peers. These groups have 24/7 supervision by staff who get to know them and build healthy, positive relationships with the youth (Missouri DYS, 2018). The Missouri model maintains safety by being highly structured, keeping the groups small, and providing constant supervision, and support. If a problem such as a conflict comes up, it is dealt with in a timely fashion with everything being put on hold and a group discussion being held to use the moment as a learning experience. These types of experiences allow the youth to learn how to express and manage their emotions and learn healthy alternatives. The facilitators of the Missouri model understand and openly discuss in their literature that the traditional corrections model generally does not treat the cause of delinquent behavior. Science does not support the traditional corrections model, and in many cases can further traumatize youth, making it more difficult to rehabilitate them (Missouri DYS, 2018). Below are some examples of the differences between the traditional corrections model and the Missouri Model provided by the Missouri Division of Youth Services.

Traditional Corrections Model VS. The Missouri Model

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Inmates, Offenders, Delinquents | • Young People, Youth |
| • External Control | • Rehabilitation |
| • Correctional Officers, Security Workers | • Youth Care Workers, Service Coordinators, Counselors |
| • Family/Community as problem | • Family & Community Partners |
| • Positional Power, Autocratic, No Relationship | • Healthy Hierarchy, Boundaries, Relationship |

Comparison model adapted From The Missouri DYS Website

Titled "About the Missouri Approach"

<http://missouriapproach.org/approach/>

The Missouri Model takes a much different approach to working with juveniles within their system as evidenced by the differences shown above. The Missouri Model strives to provide a truly therapeutic environment, starting with the regionalized facilities, and home like environments. The small groups and willingness to use therapeutic communication in place of external controls is a significant difference. The Missouri Model uses a trauma informed care approach that focuses on helping the juvenile to feel safe and works towards healing emotional

traumas. This approach encourages the youth to grow in a healthy and positive manner. In addition, the continuity of care, family therapy, and overall follow through from start to finish give the youth a solid chance to be successful and drastically reduces recidivism. The data indicates that this model is far superior to the traditional corrections model. Recidivism rates for juveniles within the Missouri system are incredibly low. Nearly 70 percent of youth remained law abiding for 3 years or longer. In addition to low recidivism rates, nearly half of all 17-year old's discharged return to the community with their GED or high school diploma, far exceeding the national average (DYS, 2018). Decreased recidivism and increased education rates are good for the individual and the community they return to.

Lincoln Hills School: A Case Study of a Failed Corrections Model

The Lincoln Hills School in northern Wisconsin is the state's largest and primary secure juvenile correctional facility. It was opened in 1970 and operated by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (Wisconsin DOC, 2021). The facility is far removed from the large metropolitan areas of the state where the majority of the youth come from. The facility operated with the traditional corrections model for over 40 years, with hundreds of youths being incarcerated at the facility at any given time, and harsh punitive methods being used to control the large population. Methods such as prolonged seclusion/solitary confinement, extended use of leg shackles and handcuffs, OC spray, and aggressive forceful tactics were all used to control the large population. For many years there were allegations of abuse, neglect, and rampant staff misconduct. Over time it appears that these state approved methods were misused, grew out of control, and on some occasions turned into criminal misconduct. Mismanagement and the harsh environment allowed a culture of violence and misconduct to run rampant.

Alarm bells and red flags were raised on multiple occasions by individuals of authority and respected organizations before the state took any formal actions. In 2011 a Wisconsin Circuit Court judge wrote a letter to the governor with concerns over a physical and sexual assault that occurred at the LHS school. The Judge stated in his letter that “[He] would need to think long and hard before sending another youth to that place.” The judge went on to state that the DOC/LHS response in handling the event was inexcusable (Kreul, 2011). In the summer of 2014, the American Psychological Association found major problems with the psychology internship program at LHS and voiced their concerns to the Wisconsin DOC (Marley, 2016). In the fall of 2014, a Wisconsin public defender alerted Department of Corrections officials to a long list of serious issues at the facility, and within a week an internal investigation was launched (Stein & Marley, 2016). Early in 2015 the Department of Corrections requested that the Wisconsin Department of Justice look into the numerous allegations at the institute. On January 23rd, 2015, a criminal investigation was launched. By the fall of 2015 the Department of Justice determined that there was evidence to support many of the allegations and there was reason to believe that multiple crimes had been committed. In December of 2015 LHS was raided by state agents (Marley & Stein, 2015). In 2016 the state of Wisconsin DOJ turned the investigation over to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (Stein et al., 2016). January of 2017 the ACLU filed a lawsuit claiming that the rights of several youth were violated. That same year a federal judge issued orders and a timeline for the phasing out of several controversial practices (Marley, 2017). Over the course of the investigation and lawsuit there was a substantial turnover in staff- many resigned or retired, and some were fired (MJS, 2019). In 2017 Wisconsin Juvenile Corrections started moving away from the traditional correctional model and worked hard to change their methods. To help implement the change many new staff were hired. This rapid shift did not

necessarily bring about the changes that many wanted. Unlike the Missouri Model that was implemented over several decades, the Wisconsin DOC implemented drastic changes in a very short period of time. The timeline was primarily dictated by the courts and monitored by the ACLU. Those actually operating the facility were not given much opportunity to be involved or have a voice in this rapid shift. The accelerated pace of change and rigid guidelines dictating how the facility had to operate resulted in numerous safety and security issues. Many staff and youth have been injured in violent incidents (Marley, 2017). The facility was slated to close in 2021 but remains open due to the lack of alternative placements (Reilly, 2021).

Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center: An Approach to Treating Extreme Cases

The Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center-MJTC is a secure treatment center established in 1995. The center is located in Madison, Wisconsin on the grounds of the Mendota Mental Health Institute-MMHI. MJTC has 29 beds reserved exclusively for youth incarcerated and under the jurisdiction of the Wisconsin Juvenile Department of Corrections (Wisconsin DHS, 2020). MJTC is considered a hybrid program borrowing ideas, methods, and aspects from both corrections and mental health care (National Gang Center, 2021). MJTC is a separate program, but works jointly with MMHI- receiving staff, training, and logistical support from the institute. Both MMHI and MJTC are operated by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services- which is an important factor. MJTC operates under DHS and not the Department of Corrections, but all of the youth at MJTC come from the DOC Lincoln Hills School. This distinction is seen in everything from the driving philosophies and rehabilitation methods to the type of staff that work within the program. MJTC's program primarily works with the most serious cases and violent juveniles within the system. Many of the youth have a substantial history of violent, aggressive

behavior and were too disruptive to manage within the traditional correctional setting (National Gang Center, 2021). Many of the youth have experienced numerous Adverse Childhood Events, and many suffer from PTSD. The fact that many of the youth have experienced severe trauma creates a unique set of challenges. The goal of the program is to rehabilitate the youth by helping them to learn positive social skills, understand the interpersonal process, build healthy social connections, and treat their mental health/behavioral issues. The MJTC program states that it is informed by both the Social Control Theory and the Theory of Defiance- meaning that they understand the importance of healthy, prosocial connections and that there is an understanding of what factors may increase hostility and defiance (Wisconsin DHS, 2020). With this knowledge, those working with the youth in MJTC work diligently to build positive healthy relationships and promote positive social behaviors. The program is built around a behavioral point system called the “Today Tomorrow Program” (MJTC, 2021). The program continuously rewards and reinforces good behavior. This program allows the youth to feel a sense of success relatively quickly, and if they have a bad day, it allows them to rebound in a very short period of time. The structure of the program continuously encourages the youth to engage in rehabilitative programming through its system of rewards and positive reinforcement. The youth who come to MJTC usually have a history of trauma, time spent in county detention centers, and a period of time at the Lincoln Hills School. In many cases the youths' negative behaviors were dealt with through strict correctional methods. Early on the clinical staff started using the term decompression when referring to the gradual adjustment the youth experienced as they slowly moved into more normalized behavior and general programming. As mentioned earlier decompression is described as clinical programming designed to gradually lift the individual out of the compressed cycle of extensive discipline or overcontrolled security measures and back to

the general population in a manner similar to that used for divers rising from the ocean depths” (Caldwell et al., 2001).

An important factor of the MJTC program is that it is staffed with psychiatric care techs/CNAs, registered nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, a recreational therapist, an art therapist, social workers, special education teachers, and numerous other staff with therapeutic backgrounds. Each youth has a team of highly trained professionals to help them with the goal of successfully returning to the community and reducing the chances of recidivism. While at MJTC, all youth attend school and are provided with an individualized education. In addition to school, the youth have the opportunity to take part in numerous extracurricular therapeutic activities, such as fitness groups, gardening, art, music, and job training. They receive individual, family, and group therapy to help them work through their unique set of issues. The psychiatrists and psychologists provide intensive mental health care, while the nurses and PCTs provide continuous 24-hour care and support. The program also has medical providers who address any medical/ health concern that may arise. The social work team is charged with helping the youth stay connected to their community, navigate the social service system, and return to their community. In addition, there are Psychiatric Care Supervisors present 24 hours a day, 7 days a week who ensure that any issues that arise during the daily operation are taken care of, and that all safety and security concerns are addressed promptly.

The overriding goal of the MJTC program is to help the youth who enter their program to be successful and reduce the chances of recidivism (MJTC, 2021). Research conducted over several years and published in 2006 supported the program's effectiveness at reducing recidivism. The average rate of recidivism for youth in corrections was 75%, while the rate for

youth in MJTC program was 35%. In addition, the MJTC youth showed a much lower propensity for committing a violent crime (Caldwell, Vitacco, & Rybroek, 2006).

In the next section we will review the components necessary to operate a juvenile corrections facility in a way that promotes rehabilitation and reduces recidivism.

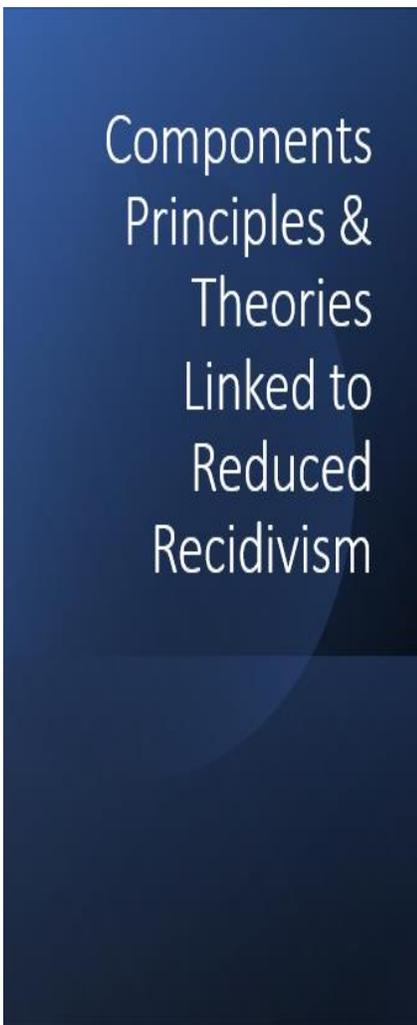
Recommendations

In the United States of America there are hundreds of facilities housing incarcerated youth. Some are using evidenced based methods and have the best interest of the youth as their guiding principle. Others continue to operate using outdated methods that may cause more harm than good. Many of these outdated methods fail to reduce delinquent behavior and, in some cases, may actually increase future criminal behavior. To best serve the youth and the communities that they return to we must move forward and implement proven recidivism reducing methods. Taxpayers deserve to have their money spent on programs that work, and incarcerated juveniles deserve to be treated humanely and be given a chance at rehabilitation.

Essential Components of a Secure Juvenile Program

The research conducted by Katy Hancock and the data found in her article *Facility Operations and Juvenile Recidivism* clearly shows that safety and healthcare are two components that weigh heavily on recidivism (Hancock, 2017). These areas need to be addressed for the other components such as education, and therapy to have a meaningful impact. Safety should always be an essential component of every program. Without a sense of safety and well-being most juveniles are going to struggle and find it incredibly difficult to engage in meaningful programming (Hancock, 2017). Adequate healthcare can play a major part in a youth's rehabilitation. Safety and healthcare are major factors. Imagine trying to talk with a therapist with a throbbing toothache or sitting in a math class trying to learn while you're afraid for your safety. When these two key areas are not addressed appropriately, they can create major challenges to successful rehabilitation. Group size is another key factor, both MJTC and the Missouri model use the small group size as a way to safely manage their programs. The Missouri Division of Youth Services reports that group size within their facilities is usually 10-12 youth (DYS, 2018). In addition, small groups encourage rapport building and help positive relationships to form. Smaller groups also support a therapeutic environment allowing therapists and front-line workers to get to know each of the juveniles and their unique needs. The Missouri model takes a unique approach and keeps the youth close to home by placing them in one of the many strategically located facilities. Keeping the youth close to home helps to keep family close and makes it easier for family therapy to take place (DYS, 2018). Skill building is something seen in both the Missouri and MJTC models. Both models stress education, job skills and life skills to help navigate the world upon release. Successful rehabilitation focused programs have well trained staff who understand that rapport building and maintaining a therapeutic environment are important factors for the youth's success and also help maintain a safe

environment. In addition to these components within the facilities, program oversight is important to establish accountability. The Missouri Model has a board that helps with problem solving, introduces new ideas, provides oversight, and accountability. When facilities and programs are operating with these key components, they are working towards reducing recidivism (DYS, 2018).



- **Always Having The Best Interest Of The Juvenile As The Primary Goal**

- Safe Environment**

- Healthcare**

- Trauma Informed Care**

- Therapy**

- Small Group Size**

- Geographically Close To Home**

- Skill Building & Job Training**

- Education**

- Oversight & Accountability**

- Social Control Theory**

- Theory of Defiance**

Guiding Principles and Theories

Always having the best interest of the juvenile in mind should be the guiding principle of every juvenile justice program. This foundational philosophy was established in 1899 by the Illinois system, which became the model widely adopted across the country (Schmallegger, 2017). If we keep this well-established philosophy as the primary goal, the system can evolve and continuously improve itself. MJTC has two theories that help inform and guide the program- the social control theory and the theory of defiance (MJTC,2021). Both of these ideas help set the course of the program and aid in its success. Understanding social control theory and the idea of building bonds is essential to the rehab process. The idea is that the more positive social bonds a juvenile has, the more likely they are to engage in prosocial behavior (Hirschi, 2017). The ideas within the theory of defiance can be incredibly helpful to those managing a facility. Understanding why juveniles behave defiantly can help decrease hostility towards authority figures and those involved in the rehabilitation process (SHERMAN, 1993). Using the knowledge derived from these theories can be beneficial to the youth and the overall success of a program.

Conclusion

The phrases *hurt people hurt other people* and *damaged people damage other people* have been used in song lyrics and discussed in academic settings. Are these statements true? According to numerous studies, these statements have data to back them up. Researchers have identified elevated adverse child events scores within the youth in custody population, and it has been established that juveniles with a trauma history are at a much higher risk for delinquent behavior and court involvement (Whitley et al., 2021). It is estimated that between 65-70% of youth in custody suffer from some form of mental illness, and many of these issues are linked to

trauma, abuse, and neglect. One study reported that 5% of youth in custody have experienced 11 or more traumatic events in their lifetime. The evidence indicates that the majority of youth in custody are trauma survivors, and many have been victims of crime. The evidence presented in this paper has shown that we as a society will be better served if we make real efforts to rehabilitate juveniles who find themselves ensnared in the juvenile justice system. Most of these youth have been caught up in a cycle of abuse and a life filled with trauma. Decades of research and a large body of evidence have shown we cannot punish these kids into being law-abiding, productive citizens. We must first help them heal, teach them positive coping mechanisms, and help them learn prosocial behavior. The juvenile justice system should work towards ending the cycle of abuse and trauma that increases the risk of criminal behavior. While each youth's mental health and behavioral issues are unique to them, programs that provide comprehensive mental health care reduce recidivism in a big way. Programs across the country that provide comprehensive mental health care to their youth in custody reduce recidivism by at least 25%, while some programs have data showing an 80% reduction in recidivism (Whitley et al., 2021). Programs that provide rehabilitation and have solid mental healthcare are far superior to the outdated punitive correctional model.

If jurisdictions want to reduce recidivism in juveniles, they would do well to look at the current information and the successful models that are up and running around the country. The basics- youth in custody need to feel safe, the populations of the program facilities need to be relatively small, healthcare/mental healthcare needs must be addressed, and rehabilitative programming needs to be provided. The facilities need to be sufficiently staffed with well-trained individuals who understand that the overriding goal is rehabilitation, not punishment. Facilities should be strategically located so that youth remain close to home. When these basic components

are in place, the blueprint to reduce recidivism is established. Programs that take this approach will positively impact the lives of the youth in their care and reduce their chances of future criminal behavior.

Future Research

While there is presently a significant amount of information at hand that would allow any jurisdiction to evolve their juvenile justice programs for youth in custody, there is still a need for further research. An important area needing continued research are the fields of psychology and neurobiology as they pertain to effective methods for healing severe trauma. We now know that adverse childhood events can alter, stunt, and damage the growing juvenile in numerous ways. The data shows that areas of the brain, immune system, and several other areas are negatively affected (Focquaert, 2019). We need to find evidenced based methods that can heal the damage incurred by ACE's. In addition, as more jurisdictions move towards the therapeutic rehabilitation type model there should be continued research tracking recidivism rates. Knowing what does and doesn't work will help in the refinement and improvement of methods, so the most effective practices can be implemented.

Juvenile justice has evolved slowly over time, but with technology and the ease of sharing information in our modern age there is no good reason why the most humane and effective methods cannot be implemented across the country.

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