

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Alternative Education Overview:
Juvenile Justice Institutions
(Short-term Locked Facilities)

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~ Introduction, Session 5~ Lecture Notes

Objective: Students will begin to gain a basic understanding of how delinquent behavior is viewed and treated in society.

Intro: Juveniles end up in short term locked facilities for numerous reasons. For example, a non-delinquent/non-criminal offense which is illegal for underage persons but not for adults (running away, incorrigibility, truancy, curfew violation, underage liquor violation that is not a delinquent or/criminal offense) constitutes the bulk of transgressions in short term detention facilities. Delinquent/criminal offenses, that is, offenses that are considered illegal for adults (murder, rape, robbery, burglary, etc.) constitute other more serious transgressions by youth that require more secure lock down facilities. Then there are reasons other than offenses such as neglect, abuse, abandonment, mental health problems, substance abuse problems, or other non-offense reasons that a youth might be placed or might need this option.

Institutional Culture

Delinquent youth housed in short term locked facilities range in ages from 7-21 years of age. The short term locked facilities continuum ranges from maximum security at Juvenile Halls/Ranches to minimum security at Youth Centers, Group Homes or other social service institutions. These settings were created to help youth offenders grow emotionally, socially and intellectually in order to be productive citizens. There were intended to create a more home like atmosphere for youth offenders in order to provide the emotional support required in order to help youth return to a more normalized environment. Unfortunately, over the years juvenile correctional institutions have begun to mirror adult prisons and punishment and subjugation have become more of the norm.

Without doubt, locked facilities provide a viable option for youth that need societal support and help. In this session one will gain a very basic understanding of delinquency and the

variety of short term locked facilities that provide assistance to youth. This session also looks at a variety of options for delinquent youth ranging from the most restricted placement in juvenile hall to the least restrictive placement in a group home.

What does delinquency mean?

Delinquency means antisocial or violent behavior in young people, often involving criminal acts. There is a wide range in the seriousness of delinquent behaviors.

Many young people commit crimes such as not paying on public transportation or shoplifting. Most young people who get involved in criminal activity simply outgrow the behavior as they get older.

What works to prevent delinquency?

Making a difference in the community:

Social development programs are the best way to prevent 'high risk' children from becoming delinquent. Social development programs include home visits, high quality childcare, and family, school and community based programs. They work to help parents give their children what they need for healthy development such as a healthy physical start, enough food, safety, warmth. These programs provide an environment where children can play, learn and explore and receive encouragement and guidance from adults.

Recognizing 'high risk' children is a key to preventing delinquency. Some forms of early childhood behavior may predict later delinquent behavior, such as attention-seeking, antisocial or aggressive behavior and poor problem-solving or self-control skills. Classroom behavior problems as early as kindergarten are often a sign of other problems in the child's life.

Community based programs work best when they counteract more than one of the 'risk' factors for becoming delinquent. The Institute for Destructive and Violent Behavior at the University of Oregon (see resources from this session) offers research based evidence that social development programs and early school intervention and wrap around services make a discernable difference in preventing delinquency.

Making the difference in families:

Many young offenders have been abused or witnessed abuse in their homes. Programs that support families and parents of very young children can significantly reduce child abuse. These

include home visiting programs to help new mothers get used to their new roles, increase their confidence and make them feel less isolated. Education and training programs also help and support parents.

Making the difference in preschool settings:

The first six years of life have the greatest importance in children's healthy development. Studies show that for children at high risk for delinquency, high quality child care and early education programs can reduce the delinquency rate. These programs are associated with high rates of high school graduation and employment.

Making the difference in schools:

Teaching that involves children and encourages their success can help to prevent delinquency. Different kinds of learning opportunities build confidence and help children feel connected to their school. Helping children feel comfortable especially in primary school can make a difference. Difficulties in the early grades can mean later school failure or drop out. Chances of getting involved in delinquent behavior increase if children drop out of school. High schools that mix the usual subjects with practical skills, such as looking for a job or managing money, may help to keep students in school.

What works to prevent re-offending?

For young people convicted of crimes, programs that include their families, schools and friends can work to prevent them from re-offending. These kinds of programs recognize that the young person might need help to change behaviors in different parts of his or her life. These programs work because they focus on peer group and family problems often linked to delinquency.

Prevention is the key to reduce the need for alternative education environments. Unfortunately, not enough dollars are allocated to the prevention side of the equation. Thus, youth that commit an offense that an adult can be tried for end up in a short term locked facility such as juvenile hall.

JUVENILE HALL

Juvenile Hall provides safe and secure detention of youth awaiting appearances in adult or juvenile court, serving time, or pending placement or delivery to other programs. Probation Department staff supervises youth programs in an environment that encourages pro-social support parents.

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Schools). Mental health personnel provide crisis intervention and medical care is provided.

JUVENILE RANCHES, FORESTRY CAMPS, (Farm, Wilderness or Marine Program)

The mission of the juvenile ranches and camps is development of offender accountability and competency, and community protection. The program stresses respectability, accountability, and responsibility in order to achieve the ranch or camp mission with each ward. At Forestry Camps wards learn skills related to all aspects of forestry such as trail restoration, building shelters, and fire control and maintenance.

Program

The length of stay for wards committed to the Boys Ranch or Camp ranges from 168 days to a maximum of one year. The Ranch/Camp is a secure 24-hour commitment facility designed for older, more sophisticated male wards with a history of serious or extensive delinquent behavior. An initial assessment is completed on all commitments. The wards usually participate in some sort of behavior management program that which rewards positive behavior with increased program privileges. Mental health counselors provide crisis counseling to wards. Medical services are available as well

Wards committed to a Boys Ranch/Camp are provided with opportunities for personal growth and social development. They are held accountable and encouraged to take responsibility for their behavior while respecting the rights of others. In furtherance of these goals, various educational and counseling programs are provided which include individual and group counseling, and evening classes consisting of anger control, drug/alcohol education, victim awareness, life, and job skills. For instance, participation by wards in the Ranch athletic league has produced championships in softball, basketball, volleyball, and cross-country. Educational opportunities abound at ranches and camps. Wards can earn high school diplomas, General Education Development (GED) certificates, and take college classes.

For example, the Sacramento County Office of Education (S.C.O.E.) in California provides a junior and senior high school curriculum, with high school credits being earned at their Boys Ranch. There are seven classrooms on campus with a teacher and teacher's aide assigned to each room. Over the past

five (5) years, 230 wards have passed the (GED) exam during their commitment.

In addition to academic instruction, (S.C.O.E.) provides a vocational training program in horticulture with wards earning certification. During the fall of 2002, two (2) additional vocational programs were added, welding and carpentry. The technology shop has already been constructed and the welding instructor has been hired. A limited program has been initiated with wards, learning basic welding skills by making workbenches, tool racks, carts and other items, which are used in the welding shop. Long-range goals include a certified welding program, certified forklift program, and mass-producing items for sale in order to produce revenue with a portion of the profits being used for victim restitution. Vocational training is an important aspect of the developing offender competency and preparing the ward for entrance to the work force.

YOUTH CENTER FACILITIES

A Youth Center facility operates as a minimum-security residential program for male and female youth committed to one of the division's two juvenile facilities. They provide youth with an environment that facilitates offender accountability, competency development, and victim restoration through needs assessment, behavior modification, counseling, education, skill development and activity.

Through intensive contact with their assigned probation officer, other probation and facility staff and the active involvement of their families, the youth are held accountable for their actions by enforcement of court-ordered conditions. Each Youth Center facility provides a full range of on-site services including a year-round school program, mental health resources, medical treatment and a milieu of rehabilitative and recreational activities. These activities are offered through the combined efforts of facility staff, community-based organizations, volunteer services and the Chaplain's office.

Juveniles may be committed to the Youth Center program by the Juvenile Court after a petition alleging a criminal offense has been sustained in Court. The Youth Center commitment involves a time frame of up to 12 months for each offender. During this time, each youth will serve a minimum of 84 days in residence at the institution. Thereafter, each youth is supervised in the community by Youth Center probation

officers until a successful transition back home is achieved.

The Youth Center Program

The program is designed to address the needs of youthful offenders ranging from moderately sophisticated to the more seriously delinquent; the average age of those committed to the program is 15 years old. The program provides a safe and structured environment for the youth that consists of a 4-step residential component, followed by a period of intense community supervision (furlough).

Residential Component:

Youth committed to Youth Center are housed a minimum of 84 days (12 weeks) at the facility. The youth are encouraged to take responsibility for their behavior and personal development, while being exposed to various activities designed to facilitate this goal. School classes, drug and alcohol counseling and education, life skills and victim awareness are mandatory components of the program. In addition, 12-step classes, job readiness training, anger management classes, peer counselor training, religious services and instruction, computer skills lab, reading skills tutoring, hygiene/sex education class and GED preparation are available to residents. In addition, gender specific resources such as female mentoring groups and the Healthy Teen Mother Program are available.

Every resident must advance through the 4-step residential component before being released from the facility. Each step advancement is predicated upon the youth reaching an expected level of achievement and participation in program activities such as schoolwork, skills development, counseling and rehabilitative activities, as well as appropriate interaction with staff, peers and family members. The achievement of these levels is measured by a weekly point system that takes all these factors into account. The points are awarded daily by probation and school staff. As each higher level is attained, this advancement is rewarded in the form of increased program privileges, home passes and special program activities. Negative behavior by residents is dealt with through a variety of sanctions which include counseling, loss of program activities/privileges, loss of home passes, Juvenile Work Project, residential program extension, or a return to Court. Once a Youth Center resident reaches their 5th level, he/she is released to his/her home under Youth Center furlough supervision.

Furlough Component:

Before a resident is furloughed from the Youth Center, they must have complied with required Court orders, attained a necessary level in the residential program and have exhibited appropriate behavior during home passes. At this point, the Deputy Probation Officer working will have the minor and family sign a furlough contract outlining acceptable behavior and the steps the minor must take to complete furlough.

Thereafter, the Deputy Probation Officer will supervise the youth in the community through home visits, random drug testing, school checks, and monitoring of compliance with other Court orders such as counseling or restitution payments.

If the youth does not conform to the requirements stipulated by the Furlough Officer, sanctions including Juvenile Work Project, week-ends in custody at the Youth Center, mandatory counseling in the community, demotion to a lower program level and return to facility custody and/or a return to Court are possible.

Once the Furlough Officer determines a successful transition to the home setting has been achieved, the youth can be graduated from the program. ©Copyright 2001. County of Sacramento Probation Department. All rights reserved. Permission

DAY CENTERS

Students are referred by the court system and county agencies. In California students are provided educational services at sites usually established and maintained by a County Board of Supervisors. Credentialed teachers provide instruction in a full day or minimum day schedule. The school day is minimum of 240 minutes.

GROUP HOMES (Social Service Institutions)

Group homes and other social service options usually serve youth that may need assistance for non-delinquent, non-criminal or for reasons other than an offense (i.e., neglect); however, these group homes may also house youth that are on parole for a criminal offense. The group home constitutes a more normalized environment usually situated in a neighborhood. Youth often return to public schooling and continue to receive additional social and emotional support as well as vocational training.

QUALITY EDUCATION/SOCIAL PROGRAMS IN JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

More than 125,000 youth are in custody in nearly 3,500 public and private juvenile correctional facilities in the United States (Snyder, 1998). The majority of youth enter correctional facilities with a broad range of intense educational, mental health, medical, and social needs. Large numbers of incarcerated juveniles are marginally literate or illiterate and have experienced school failure and retention (Center on Crime, Communities, and Culture, 1997). These youth are also disproportionately male, poor, minority, and have significant learning and/or behavioral problems that entitle them to special education and related services.

Because education is critical to rehabilitation for troubled youth, it is considered the “foundation for programming in most juvenile institutions” (OJJDP, 1994, p. 129). Helping youth acquire educational skills is also one of the most effective approaches to the prevention of delinquency and the reduction of recidivism. Literacy skills are essential to meet the demands of a complex, high-tech world in school and at work. Higher levels of literacy are associated with lower rates of juvenile delinquency, re-arrest, and recidivism.

While illiteracy and poor academic performance are not direct causes of delinquency, empirical studies consistently demonstrate a strong link between marginal literacy skills and the likelihood of involvement in the juvenile justice system. Most incarcerated youth lag two or more years behind their age peers in basic academic skills, and have higher rates of grade retention, absenteeism, and suspension or expulsion. For example, a national study found that more than one-third of youth incarcerated at the median age of 15.5 adolescents read below the 4th grade level (Project READ, 1978).

The negative consequences of marginal literacy extend beyond the greatly heightened risk for incarceration among adolescents. The rate of poverty among those in the labor force without a high school diploma is approximately three times that of high school graduates (U. S. Department of Labor, 1997; William T. Grant Foundation, 1989). Eighteen to twenty-three year olds least proficient in the basic skills of reading and mathematics are more likely to be unemployed, living in poverty, and not enrolled in any type of schooling.

Despite compelling evidence that increased literacy skills promote pro-social outcomes, education programs in many juvenile correctional facilities are inadequate. Appropriate educational services in juvenile corrections may not be a priority when the school program and security functions have to compete for limited resources.

Unfortunately, the lack of attention to the educational rights of delinquent youth is part of a disturbing trend in corrections to provide youth with minimal services. In recent years, advocates have initiated class-action litigation to challenge inadequate educational practices in juvenile correctional facilities in over 20 states (Leone & Meisel, 1997). Although rates of juvenile offending continue to decline (Snyder, 1999), the media's negative portrayal of troubled youth distorts the extent and nature of delinquency and may also erode public support for correctional education programs. While many jurisdictions struggle to implement appropriate education programs in juvenile corrections, quality education services are provided to incarcerated youth in some states.

Promising Academic Programs in Juvenile Corrections

While the majority of detained and committed youth have severe to moderate skill deficits, and prior school experiences marked by truancy, suspension, and expulsion, others may be performing at or above grade level. As a result, juvenile correctional education programs should provide the following comprehensive range of options:

- Literacy and functional skills for students with significant cognitive, behavioral, or learning problems;
- Academic courses associated with Carnegie unit credits for students likely to return to public schools or who may earn a diploma while incarcerated;
- General Educational Development (GED) preparation for students not likely to return to public schools; and
- Pre-vocational and vocational education related to student interests and meaningful employment opportunities in the community.

With permission-National Center Education, Disability, Juvenile Justice EDJJ (Questions and/or comments should be sent to EDJJ edjj@umail.umd.edu University of Maryland, 1224 Benjamin Building College Park, MD 20742 Phone (301)

Promising Social Programs in Juvenile Corrections

A number of new approaches involve young people, their families and their communities in seeking solutions to the problems of crime.

- Youth Justice Committees act as extensions of the usual court system. They are made up of a cross-section of community volunteers. Thinking also of the victim, they decide on a consequence for the young person that fits in with the Young Offenders Act.
- Family Group Conferencing is based on a New Zealand native model to include family, friends and neighbors of both the young person and the victim in making a plan to respond to the crime. This kind of meeting is an alternative to sending the young person to court.
- Sentencing Circles also involve community members in making decisions about punishment. Sentencing Circles take place mostly in Aboriginal communities.
- Restorative Justice programs wherein the offender takes responsibility for his/her actions through victim restoration efforts (see article by Devore and Gentilcore in Session # 6).

What Doesn't Work?

Locking Up Youth: Locking up young people, especially less serious offenders, and keeping them in custody is the most expensive, least effective way to prevent them from further crimes. Studies have shown that locking young people up to scare them away from crime does not work. They often respond with increased aggression, anger and rates of re-offending. Custody should be reserved for youth that represent a clear risk to community safety. It costs about \$100,000 a year to keep one young person in custody.

Boot Camps: Boot camps' are a type of custody based on the military training model. The belief is that the strict discipline will keep young people from re-offending and will increase their sense of personal responsibility. Overall, boot camps do not reduce the rate of re-offending.

Harsh punishment: There is an increase in the number of juveniles with mental illness and emotional problems that make extreme demands on staff. Severe punishment works in the short run; however, the initial problem behavior usually intensifies or worsens.