

ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

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Community Services

According to the estimations of some researchers in the sphere of criminal justice, a meaningful community service is one of the most effective alternative strategies used by numerous juvenile courts and probation departments for punishing juvenile offenders (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). However, the effectiveness of this alternative type of sanctions depends on quality of a community-based program, which may be either punitive or redemptive. More than ten thousands juvenile delinquents across the U. S. participate in community-services and community-based residential programs on a daily basis (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). Taking into account some statistics, on the territory of Pennsylvania, for instance, 17, 576 juvenile delinquency cases were closed because juvenile offenders successfully completed approximately 600, 000 hours of community service (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). According to the information provided by the South Carolina's Report of Juvenile Justice, approximately 85, 000 hours of community service were successfully completed by juvenile offenders and, consequently, 8, 116 cases were closed in 2006-2007 (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). Taking into consideration the general essence of the term, community service denotes services which are volunteered by separate individuals or organizations with the primary purpose of ensuring the benefits to the community or its institutions. However, Thomas and Hunninen claim that mandated community services should be implemented in juvenile courts because of a number of benefits as these services increase offender accountability, restore victims, and, finally, reconnect youth and community (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). The researchers have come to

conclusion that mandated community service should correspond to voluntary community service objectives. In other words, mandated community services and community-based residential programs within the sphere of juvenile criminal justice should facilitate civil engagement, improve relations among the juvenile delinquents and the community, enhance employability, and promote basic job skills (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). While performing mandated community services, juvenile delinquents should have an opportunity to achieve the following goals:

- develop critical thinking;
- improve problem solving skills;
- gain the basic understanding of how to make constructive life changes;
- have opportunity to form meaningful relationships with other members of community;
- get a profound knowledge about community problems;
- recognize the urgent need for voluntary or mandatory involvement and its effectiveness (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008).

Thomas and Hunninen are proponents of the idea that mandatory community service ensures a chance for juvenile delinquents to earn redemption (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). Community acceptance of juvenile offenders foresees a direct demonstration that a juvenile delinquent understands and acknowledges the damages that he/she has caused and takes punishment with the primary purpose to make things right. This assessment and affirmation of responsibility together with willingness to change and make amends in favor of the community by performing community services is a direct sign that juvenile delinquents may change their behavior and earn their way back into the graces of their community

(Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). At the same time, the researchers assure that all community services, either voluntary or mandatory, should be meaningful or, in other words, provide benefits to community (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008).

Mandated community services are more meaningful and beneficial to juvenile offenders in case they encourage participation of the community, provide assistance to the “vulnerable” groups of people, motivate the youth to be active, promote changes in community perceptions of the juvenile delinquents, and, finally, assist the offenders in developing and improving a more positive sense of self (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). Therefore, the researchers have come to conclusions that community service is considered to be far more meaningful for juvenile delinquents in case this mandatory community services helps the offenders to work side-by-side with numerous community volunteers (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). Statistics prove that in case a community service team consists only of offenders and is supervised and guided by either court or probation employees, juvenile delinquents will have limited opportunities for successful integration in the community (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008). In other words, presence of community volunteers is extremely significant, because civilians who work on a voluntary basis will perceive the work of juvenile delinquents as service rather than a punishment for minor offences or serious criminal acts (Thomas & Hunninen, 2008).

Furthermore, numerous researchers who investigate community services as effective alternative methods of punishment of juvenile offenders assure that community services positive impact adolescent criminals in case community volunteers agree to assist them in identification as well as completion of different community service projects (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006). Community volunteers should participate in monitoring,

supervision, guidance, and mentoring of offenders. A significantly large percentage of people, especially those that have become victims of severe crimes, have extremely negative perceptions of dissatisfied youth acting in an anti-social manner. That is why voluntary and mandatory community services serve as an effective medium for changing the negative attitudes towards youthful troublemakers. Community services and community-based residential programs provide adolescent criminals with a unique opportunity of reintegrating into the mainstream of their community (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006).

In addition, voluntary and mandatory community services assist teenage troublemakers in redefining themselves as welcoming, caring, and peaceful community members who contribute to the assets of their community. Researchers differentiate a vast scope of restorative community services that help juvenile offenders to obtain some job skills and other important vocational skills. For instance, close cooperation with the local law enforcement agencies in order to remove graffiti is one of the best examples of community services for juvenile delinquents accused of minor offences (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006). Moreover, providing assistance to financially needy as well as disabled individuals, ensuring helpful services to terminally ill people in nursing homes and hospice care centers, and delivering firewood to numerous low-income community members are other creative and unusual examples of community services that may involve young offenders (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006).

The results of statistics prove that community services should be viewed as effective sanctions towards juvenile delinquents because the community services and other residential programs are primarily focused not on punishment, but rather on rehabilitation and accountability of adolescent criminals (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006). Despite the fact that these

services may serve as important resources for governmental as well as non-profit organizations, they positively impact the health and welfare of the communities and its members. In general, governmental agencies should be expansive, extraordinary, and creative in the process of developing meaningful and effective community service programs to achieve their service goals, benefit the community, and give the chance to youthful criminals to rehabilitate and mend their ways (Degelman, Dogett, Medina, 2006).

As a result, having shed light on the efficiency of community services and assessed the statistical data as well as the estimations of juvenile-justice professionals, it is possible to come to a conclusion that community services, either voluntary or mandatory, are the most creative, practical, and effective option for juvenile delinquents because it gives the unique chance to them to give back to the community, develop, and change negative attitudes of the majority of people towards juvenile delinquents.

Boot Camps for Juvenile Delinquents

Boot camps are an alternative type of juvenile corrections which is becoming increasingly popular for incarceration in numerous regions. It is extremely important to emphasize the fact that many countries have embraced the “boot camps” as a cost-effective and influential alternative to the traditional methods of detention, including incarceration (Muscar, 2008). However, with the pass of time the boot camps methods of punishment have become extremely controversial and ambiguous types of punishment because of numerous convincing arguments (Muscar, 2008).

Regardless of the fact that boot camp methods and techniques vary

significantly depending on location, all of them are based on short-term residential programs or, in other words, intensive or shock incarceration methods of punishment. The primary purpose of juvenile boot camps is to minimize the rates of recidivism among the juvenile delinquents by modifying their antisocial behavior (Muscar, 2008).

Behavior modification of juvenile criminals may occur either through promotion of positive behavior or through immediate punishment of abusive behavior. At the same time, a secondary purpose of juvenile boot camps is to ensure cost-effective and influential alternative to incarceration by diverting young criminals from traditional correctional methods and facilities and having them serve a comparatively short period of time in prison (Muscar, 2008). Moreover, juvenile boot camps are primarily concentrated on promoting youths' literacy and academic successes and decreasing negative habits, especially drug and alcohol abuse (Muscar, 2008).

According to some statistical data, eleven states in the USA operated juvenile boot camps in 2009. The majority of boot camps for juvenile delinquents are correctional facilities because they function as a disposition for teenage criminals who are adjudicated delinquents (Lipsey et al., 2010). Moreover, nowadays there are numerous private as well as school-based juvenile boot camps that are specifically designed for troubled students who behave antisocially and break the school rules. However, researchers differentiate three major types of boot camps, which are military style boot camps that promote strict behavior, rehabilitative boot camps, and, finally, educational models of boot camps.

Despite the growing popularity of this alternative form of punishment for adolescent troublemakers, correctional juvenile boot camps are extremely controversial (Lipsey et al., 2010). According to the assumptions of

professionals in the sphere of criminal justice, the major controversy lies in whether these camps should be considered as appropriate ways of treatment of juvenile offenders. Many people who have either visited boot camps or worked there assure that the atmosphere of a juvenile camp is conducive to positive changes and development of people (Lipsey et al., 2010). Therefore, proponents of boot camps lay the stress on the fact that well-developed structure of the program and professional staff create absolutely safe atmosphere for juvenile offenders. Consequently, in this safe atmosphere, juvenile offenders are less likely to fight and be victimized by other teenage troublemakers than in traditional correctional facilities, including incarceration (Lipsey et al., 2010).

In contrast, the opponents of juvenile boot camps are convinced that boot camps atmosphere does not correspond with positive interpersonal relationships among the juvenile delinquents and impedes their positive development (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012). Moreover, critics of juvenile boot camps stress that every boot camp is primarily based on constant and strict control over activities and interactions of juvenile criminals that deprives teenage offenders of the opportunity to improve educational (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012). Existing literature on the subject proves that juvenile boot camps do not contribute to reduction in recidivism. Recidivism rates are very discouraging because some researchers state that recidivism among the participants of such juvenile camps is higher in comparison to traditional prisons (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012). For example, according to the results of statistics, the recidivism rate among released juvenile offenders is equal to seventy two percent. On the contrary, the ratio of released juvenile offenders of traditional detention centers, especially prisons, comprises approximately fifty percent. Moreover, some researchers present data which proves that people who served their terms in boot camps are more likely to be rearrested than juvenile offenders who were incarcerated

(Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012).

Many researchers provide convincing evidence that juvenile boot camps are more expensive compared to usual correctional centers and institutions, though the term or length of camp programs is much shorter than traditional incarceration services (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012). In addition, juvenile boot camps should not be perceived as “quick fix” because opponents of these camps express concerns that more than 60% of juvenile delinquents lack maturity, skills, and self-control to finish these military-style programs (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012).

However, several structured interviews with facility administrators prove that boot camp staff ensures safe environment for juvenile offenders and gives them an opportunity to be better prepared for release. Boot camp workers claim that camp atmosphere significantly lessens personal stress among juvenile delinquents and contributes to more effective communication (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, Carver, 2010). Numerous research studies prove that juvenile boot camps significantly decrease anxiety, fear, and depression among juvenile delinquents. Thus, despite numerous critics of juvenile boot camps, nowadays these establishments remain the most publicized and effective rehabilitative centers that focus on the achievement of the following goals: deterrence, incapacitation, punishment, rehabilitation, and cost effectiveness (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, Carver, 2010). In other words, juvenile boot camps are created to achieve significant reduction in further unethical behavior or criminal activities among juvenile delinquents, to change attitudes and values of teenage criminals, to contribute to their educational achievements, and to address some personal tragedies, deficiencies, or problems that are thought to be directly linked with criminal activities (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, Carver, 2010).

Adventure Programs and Wilderness Therapy for Juvenile Delinquents

Many sources provide evidence in favor of effectiveness of adventure programs and wilderness therapies. According to some statistical data, the origin of adventure therapy programs for adolescent criminals dates back to the second part of the twentieth century or, in other words, the beginning of 1960s (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015). However, with as time passes more than eighty different wilderness programs and adventure therapies have emerged and developed as an effective alternative to the traditional methods of juvenile delinquents treatment. The majority of these wilderness programs last less from two weeks to thirty days, and include a wide range of progressively complex physical exercises in order to develop skills upon which juvenile offenders can rely in the future (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015). In general, adventure programs for teenage criminals focus on diverse outdoor activities to make juvenile offenders behave as a cooperative community, relieve stress or anxiety, develop problem-solving skills, and, finally, enhance self-control. In spite of considerable research, definite findings that prove the long-term efficiency of adventure programs and therapies, reduced recidivism, and significant positive personality changes are scarce (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015).

The research study presented by Clem, Prost, and Thyer (2015) proves that wilderness therapies and adventure programs for juvenile criminals should be extensively involved in the juvenile justice system because these alternative treatment show positive results (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015). At most, wilderness therapy strives for changing the behavior and attitudes of juvenile delinquents towards their community and its members. Secondly, on the basis of experienced-based activities and challenging outdoor experiences, wilderness therapies assist adolescents in self-disclosure as well

as self-empowerment (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015). The common goal for all wilderness therapies and adventure programs is to minimize antisocial behavior, including recidivism, and rehabilitate youthful offenders. It is believed that wilderness therapies are much more effective than traditional methods of punishment in juvenile justice system, because it results in enhancement of pro-social behavior and provides efficient rehabilitative and preventive intervention (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015). Despite the fact that some researchers do not recognize wilderness therapies for juvenile delinquents as effective alternatives to incarceration, proponents of adventure programs prove that these therapies contribute to decreased recidivism rates and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Clem, Prost, Thyer, 2015).

Intensive Supervision of Juvenile Delinquents

It should be noted that intensive supervision programs encompass a vast scope of methods and strategies that are aimed at contributing to a decreased rates of recidivism and to rehabilitation of adolescent offenders. One of the recent experiments conducted by a juvenile court in Detroit with participation of 500 youths proves that intensive supervision is effective, as it has managed to decrease the rates of recidivism by 34% (Lowenkamp, Flores, Holsinger, Makarois, Latessa, 2010).

The researchers have come to conclusion that juvenile intensive supervision is effective because it gives the chance to increase control and guidance over the delinquent's behavior. In addition, this approach towards punishment of juvenile criminals incorporates not only rehabilitation goals, but incapacitative and correctional goals as well (Lowenkamp, Flores,

Holsinger, Makarois, Latessa, 2010).

In one of the most comprehensive scientific efforts of exploring the delinquents' perception and understanding the intermediate sanctions, survey results revealed that approximately 70% of juvenile offenders confess that intensive supervision is more punitive than even a short term incarceration (Lowenkamp, Flores, Holsinger, Makarois, Latessa, 2010). On the contrary, one of the findings conducted by the Washington State Institute of Public Police, based on 20,000 juvenile offenders, proves that intensive supervision is no more effective than a routine probation because recidivism rates have increased by more than 6% (Lowenkamp, Flores, Holsinger, Makarois, Latessa, 2010).

Home Confinement and Electronic Monitoring of Juvenile Delinquents

Home confinement or, in other words, home arrest, either with or without an electronic monitoring is recognized as an effective alternative for incarceration. This type of correctional programs is primarily aimed at restricting the anti-social activities of juvenile delinquents (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012). Home confinement foresees continuous monitoring of juvenile offenders' behavior in order to ensure that they comply with the conditions determined by the court. Moreover, the level of monitoring is always set by courts and depends on severity of criminal offence. Electronic monitoring programs involve a wide range of technologies that are usually assigned by the courts to track and restrict location and movement of juvenile delinquents (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012). Nowadays, electronic monitoring is incredibly popular within the sphere of juvenile justice system and includes numerous technologies, especially wrist as well

as ankle bracelets, field monitoring devices, and, finally, voice verification systems (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012).

The proponents of home confinement and electronic monitoring assure that these alternative methods of punishment are very effective in modern society because of the financial savings and decreased of recidivism. Furthermore, tracking the juveniles with help of bracelets and field monitoring devices ensures a chance to law enforcement personnel to perform around-the-clock crisis interventions (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012). On the contrary, the researchers who disagree with the efficiency of home arrest and electronic monitoring claim that cost to juvenile delinquents and their families is the biggest disadvantage of this alternative because this juvenile justice program burdens indigent families because of fees and additional costs for maintaining and activation of electronic monitoring programs (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012). Regardless much controversies over the efficiency of home confinement and electronic monitoring as effective alternative sanctions, it is important to emphasize that application of electronic monitoring brings good results because it increases public safety, gives the chance to law enforcement agents to track juvenile delinquents, and decreases victimization rates (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012).

Finally, the proponent of house arrest and electronic monitoring come to a conclusion that these methods of punishment are a reliable alternative for those juvenile delinquents who have not committed serious crimes. The major advantages of these alternative sanctions are a de-escalation of conflict, an opportunity for reduced prison populations, cost effectiveness, a possibility for juvenile delinquents' rehabilitation, their reintegration into the community, and, finally, avoidance of psychological pressures of incarceration (Roman, Liberman, Taxy, Downey, 2012).