

Reforming the Juvenile Justice System:
Rehabilitation and Key Factors that Influence Juvenile Crime

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Introduction

Aaron Phillips, a man from Pennsylvania, has been in prison for over three decades for a crime he committed when he was seventeen years old. When Aaron was seventeen, he and his friend stole an elderly man's wallet and pushed him down in the process. Although the man was injured, he was up and walking after his injury. About two and a half weeks after the incident, the elderly man died from cardiac arrest, after having surgery to repair his fractured hip along with a separate intestinal surgery. Aaron was convicted of felony murder and tried as an adult. Despite entering the system as a teenager, Aaron was not given access to academic, vocational, or rehabilitative services because such services are only provided to inmates that will be released. Although Aaron has grown and matured since his offense, he will never be released from prison because he was sentenced to life without parole.

The juvenile justice system was created to deal with the youth who have committed and have been convicted of crimes. The idea of this system was to create a separation between youth and adult offenders, with the focus of rehabilitating the juveniles, rather than punishing them. The system is fairly new and has only been around for a little more than two centuries. Over the years, the structure and functions of this system have been challenged and changes have been made. These changes have resulted in the juvenile justice system evolving into a system that relates more to the criminal justice system. Further, the juvenile justice system has continued to evolve and each juvenile court varies from one jurisdiction to the next. However, there are many flaws in the current juvenile justice system, including how the juveniles are dealt with. While some believe that the juvenile system needs to focus on rehabilitation, others believe that it needs to focus on punishment.

Many factors can affect the behavior of the youth and determine which children are most likely to end up in the juvenile justice system. While it is not always the case, some of the main factors that can affect these children include brain maturation, family life, the community the child is raised in, and mental illness. By exploring why certain factors affect which children are more likely to become offenders, it will be easier to find a solution that works to prevent juveniles from becoming repeat offenders. Because of the factors involved, the best way to handle juvenile offenders is by creating a balanced system by using both rehabilitation and accountability. Although not every system will work for every individual, this balanced system will work best for the majority of juveniles.

History

The juvenile justice system was strongly influenced by equity doctrines and the common law of England (Caldwell, 1961). In the English courts, children were given different treatment than others who had committed crimes. This principle later allowed protection of delinquents through state intervention in juvenile courts. One legal root of the juvenile justice system was the “presumption of innocence thrown about children by the common law” (Caldwell, 1961, p. 494). In this doctrine, children under “the age of seven were presumed incapable of committing crimes.” Furthermore, “between the ages of seven and fourteen children were also presumed incapable of a crime” but could be convicted if it was shown that they had awareness of what they were doing. After fourteen, children were held accountable for their actions and received the same treatment as adult criminals (Caldwell, 1961, p. 494).

In the nineteenth century, early American reformers wanted to “discard the widespread use of capital punishment” by using incarceration to rehabilitate the offenders instead (Fox, 1966, p. 30). These reformers also developed the idea of separate juvenile facilities that were

designed for rehabilitation instead of punishment. The idea was to help treat the children and prevent them from committing future crimes. To help protect children from jails and prisons, “institutions for juvenile offenders were opened in New York in 1825, in Boston in 1826, and in Philadelphia in 1828” (Caldwell, 1961, p. 494). Over time, more institutions were opened in other parts of the country as well. Larger institutions began to emerge in “the form of industrial and reform schools” (Fox, 1966, p. 31). These facilities were meant to care for the juveniles while also disciplining them to remind them that laws had been broken.

Many of the nineteenth-century institutions also housed noncriminal youths with the juvenile offenders. The noncriminal youths that were placed in these establishments were neglected, homeless, or abused children (Fox, 1966). Further, the noncriminal youths were placed within these facilities because, like wrongdoers, they became subject to the notice of police. In other words, because the noncriminal youths were neglected and abused, it was believed that there was a higher chance that they would eventually commit crimes as well. Therefore, it was also believed that these juveniles and noncriminal children needed the same type of treatment and rehabilitation to “prevent them from eroding the social order as adult criminals” (Fox, 1966, p. 32). Eventually the placement of non-criminal and criminal youth together was challenged and non-criminal youths were no longer committed to the same institutions.

The first juvenile court was established in Chicago on July 1, 1899 (Caldwell, 1961). The law that established this court was called “An Act to Regulate the Treatment and Control of Dependent, Neglected, and Delinquent Children” (Caldwell, 1961, p. 495). The juvenile court gave jurisdiction to children under the age of sixteen that violated any law. Eventually other states began to establish juvenile courts. Within ten years, “twenty states and the District of

Columbia enacted juvenile court laws” and by 1945 “the list of states having juvenile court laws was finally complete” (Caldwell, 1961, p. 496). Other courts, such as Family Courts, were also established to deal with juveniles and family problems. The courts were meant to act in the best interest of the children. All juvenile courts were to have “a special judge, a separate courtroom, separate records, and an informal procedure, which meant that such important parts of the criminal court trial such as the indictment, pleadings, and jury were to be eliminated” (Caldwell, 1961, p. 495). As a result, this created additional distinctions between juvenile courts and criminal courts.

Overtime, changes to the juvenile courts have transformed these courts to be more like criminal courts. Two cases that have caused change in the way the juvenile justice system runs were *Kent v. United States* in 1966 and later the case of *In re Gerald Gault* (American Bar Association, n.d.). In both cases, the juveniles had been denied their constitutional rights to a fair trial. After being challenged, it was found that juveniles are entitled to the key elements of the due process to ensure fairness in their hearings (ABA, n.d.). Most of the same requirements of due process that are now guaranteed in criminal cases are also required in juvenile cases, therefore blurring the distinction between juvenile and criminal proceedings.

Factors

Although there have been many changes throughout the years, including how the system is run, one thing has remained the same; how children and adolescents become juvenile offenders. There have been many factors that have been found to play a substantial role in who is most likely to end up in the juvenile system. These factors are important to take into account when trying to find the best solution for how to treat juveniles once they have entered the system.

In recent discussions of brain maturation, a controversial issue has been whether or not this factor should be taken into account when considering the treatment of juveniles. On one hand, some argue that juveniles are impulsive and do not have the ability to govern their thoughts and actions, and therefore should not receive the same harsh punishments as adult criminals. From this perspective, rehabilitation would be an important factor in the treatment plan. On the other hand, however, others argue that juveniles have the ability to understand right from wrong. Recent research has shown that because of the development of the brain in adolescents, the juvenile justice system needs to focus less on punishment and more on rehabilitation. This was shown through the Supreme Court's decision that "abolished the death penalty for minors in 2005 and restricted life without parole sentences" (Burke, 2011, p. 381). Although capital punishment has been abolished, many juveniles are still waived to adult courts and receive harsh punishments. Based on my research, my own view is that brain maturation is an important factor to consider when looking for the best treatment plan for juveniles.

Adolescents are at a higher risk for committing crimes because of changes that occur in their brains, which leads to poor decision-making. "Despite the relative improvements in judgement and decision-making that occur as adolescents age, high-risk behavior appears to continue into early adulthood" (Kambam & Thompson, 2009, p. 176). This is caused by changes that occur in the body during the age of adolescence. Changes in the socio-emotional system lead to increased reward-seeking behaviors, whereas changes in the cognitive-control system improves adolescents' self-regulation (Kambam & Thompson, 2009). The time between the increase in reward-seeking behaviors and self-regulation, causes a time gap, which can lead to reckless behavior. During this time, adolescents also have an increase in thrill-seeking behaviors. This is caused by the adolescent's willingness to "take risks in order to seek out

stimulating or novel experiences” (Kambam & Thompson, 2009, p. 177). Additionally, adolescents tend to act on impulse, without considering the consequences of their actions.

Children and adolescents are also at a higher risk of committing crimes because certain regions of the brain, that control behavior, are not yet fully developed. The frontal lobe, which is located at the front of the brain, plays an important role in decision-making. Some of the major functions of this brain region include, “planning and executing movements as well as impulse control, judgement, memory, problem solving, language, spontaneity, and sexual behavior” (Burke, 2011, p. 383). In other words, the frontal lobe allows individuals to understand right from wrong and suppress unacceptable thoughts and responses. Research has found that the frontal lobe is the “last brain region to mature and it continues to develop between adolescence and early adulthood” (Burke, 2011, p. 383). This suggests that children and adolescents do not have the same ability as adults to control their emotions and behaviors or understand the consequences of an action.

Therefore, after extensive research on brain maturation, many studies have concluded that children and adolescents do not have the full complexity to understand right from wrong. Because of these findings, it is important that this factor is taken into account when deciding how to handle these juveniles. Rehabilitation would work best in these situations to help teach the juveniles right from wrong. In addition, these juveniles still need to be held accountable for their actions, while being rehabilitated, to deter them from becoming repeat offenders. By showing these delinquents that what they did was wrong, I believe it would decrease their chances of committing future crimes. I would also argue that punishment would not work in these cases, because if the wrongdoers do not have the ability to completely understand what they did wrong, they also would not understand why they are being punished. This could cause the juveniles to

act out more, or be less likely to cooperate with what they are being told. It is also important to note that not every child develops at the same rate. Therefore, some adolescents' brains may develop slower or faster than others.

Another major factor that influences which youths are likely to end up in the system is family life. Abuse, neglect, and family influences have all been shown to influence a juvenile's delinquent behavior. One finding showed that around "three million cases of abuse and neglect are reported annually" (Dowd, 2011, p. 5). Children who have been abused and neglected are "38 percent more likely to commit violent crimes" (Dowd, 2011, p. 5). Moreover, parents and guardians, act as models for their children. In other words, children tend to follow the behaviors and actions of their parents. If a parent acts in a negative way, the child is also more likely to act in a negative way as well. Children are also more likely to generalize the learned negative attitude to the rest of society (Carlson, n.d.). This shows that parents have a strong influence on their child's behavior.

There are many parenting techniques that can have an impact on a child's behavior. One parenting technique that has been found to have the greatest impact is parental support. Parental support includes behaviors toward the child, "such as praising, encouraging, and giving affection" (Carlson, n.d., p. 44). These behaviors show the child that they are valued and loved. One study from 1950 found that "juvenile offenders were more likely to come from homes where parents used coercive parenting" and the children did not feel loved or supported (Carlson, n.d., p. 45). Further, studies have found that this support and bond between the parent and child builds the child's self-control (Carlson, n.d.). This self-control will therefore help prevent deviant behaviors from forming.

Along with support, parents must also provide their children with structure and discipline. Paying attention to the child's behavior and disciplining them will help the child understand the difference between right and wrong. It is important for parents to recognize when deviant behavior occurs in their child, and respond by using consistent discipline. Consistent discipline "must be insured at the sighting of these behaviors in order to prevent" these behaviors from developing (Carlson, n.d., p. 44). On the other hand, it is important that parents do not use overly harsh punishments, as that will only further the problem. Parents should also monitor their child and keep track of "who their friends are and what they do on their free time" (Carlson, n.d., p. 44). This will help to ensure that the child is not headed down the wrong path. Further, communication is very important for parenting. A lack of it may cause a child to be "defensive, reject their responsibilities, and increase their anger" (Carlson, n.d., p. 44). This leads to an increased risk of delinquent behavior.

Another important aspect of family life, that is becoming more common in our society, is divorce. More children are witnessing unhealthy relationships filled with fighting, and later divorce. A child dealing with this may "blame themselves for the conflict, leading to feelings of guilt and low self-esteem" (Carlson, n.d., p. 45). These feelings can cause a lot of stress on the child. Furthermore, the conflict between parents may cause a decrease in parenting skills and weaken the bonds between the parents and the child. When bonds are weakened, the child's "self-control decreases, causing the adolescent to act out and engage in deviant behaviors" (Carlson, n.d., p. 45). Another study performed in 2008 showed that "adolescents living in families who experience more transitions, such as divorces or economic hardships, experience lower levels of parental attachment and supervision, as well as less consistent discipline, and

more hostile family environments” (Carlson, n.d., p. 45). Therefore, when issues arise within family life, a child’s chances of entering the juvenile justice system increases.

Lastly, there is a strong link between peer influence and delinquent behavior. When parents do not have strong bonds with their children, the children have difficulty forming friendships and can feel rejected (Carlson, n.d.). This rejection causes children to associate with deviant peers. Children are often pressured by these deviant peers into participating in illegal activities, to fit in or feel accepted (Carlson, n.d.). As a result, many children who do not have strong bonds with their parents, have an increased risk of becoming juveniles.

Rehabilitation is the best treatment plan to consider when caring for juveniles who do not have healthy family lives. Many of these juveniles do not receive the proper nurturing and structure they should at home. Due to the way these delinquents were raised their entire lives, they may not have the ability to act appropriately in society. These children and juveniles only know what they see at home and do not know any differently. Therefore, it is important that once they enter the system, they are taught right from wrong. They also need to feel loved and supported while staying in these juvenile facilities, because it is something they have never had before. These feelings of love and affection can help rehabilitate them and give them a sense of self-worth. Shay Bilchik, the founder and director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy, uses an ecological model to provide a new footprint for the juvenile justice system (Dowd, 2011). Bilchik identifies love, hope, and opportunity as the critical factors of the system, to achieve core goals for kids (Dowd, 2011). This model focuses on support and love to help prevent reoccurring delinquent behavior and allow juvenile offenders to attain better outcomes in life.

Furthermore, I also believe that if a delinquent is brought to a facility and then released, they should not be allowed back with their family, if their family structure is very unstable. Although I believe that children need their parents, parents should not have parental rights if they are abusing drugs or are neglecting/abusing their children. By allowing juveniles to go back into these conditions, the system is setting them up for failure. This setting will increase the juveniles' chances of returning to their old ways and becoming repeat offenders.

Although it is not always easy to predict which children and adolescents are in poor family situations, I believe that some preventive measures need to be taken. It is important that programs, such as child protective services, intervene with these situations as soon as possible to help prevent delinquent behaviors from occurring. Although some may object that not all juveniles come from "bad" homes, I still hold that rehabilitation is important because a majority of juveniles do come from bad situations.

Another factor that plays a major role in who is most likely to end up in the juvenile justice system is the community the child lives in. This includes the neighborhood, schooling, and peer influences within the community. Poor neighborhoods have been shown to have a large effect on juvenile crime and the number of American children who are currently living in poverty is around one in five (Dowd, 2011). Further, children living in poverty have less access to services, such as mental health care, and schooling. Therefore, these children are less likely to attend good schools or participate in sports and clubs during their free time. These poor neighborhoods are also filled with drugs and violence (Dowd, 2011). Because these children do not have programs and activities to be involved with, they are more likely to roam the streets, which increases the opportunity for them to commit crime. Furthermore, parents who have less money may have to work longer hours to make ends meet. This increases the amount of time

that children and adolescents are spent by themselves without someone to monitor their behavior or provide structure in their lives (Carlson, n.d.). The youth who have grown up in these high crime neighborhoods may witness crimes taking place and feel as if it is the way of life in their community.

These neighborhoods also tend to have high instances of gang violence. Gangs tend to be located in neighborhoods that do not have strong parental guidance and structure. Communities that are not well monitored lead to an “up-rise in juvenile crime” (Carlson, n.d., p. 46). Despite what some may think, many gang members tend to be adolescents and young adults. In fact, “more than 700,000 youths belong to street gangs” (Ramirez, 2008). Adolescents who are involved in gangs have a life filled with delinquent behavior, such as violence and drug abuse. Many delinquents who become a part of gangs are pressured into it, or feel as if they do not have any other option. The drug abuse that comes with gangs is also a big problem within the juvenile justice system. Juvenile offenders who do drugs are more likely to act out and exhibit delinquent behaviors. It has been found that youth who have been exposed to community violence are at higher risk for substance use disorders (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017).

Schooling within the community is another major factor linked to delinquent behavior. Children who are not taught specific behaviors by their parents, such as “being considerate, helpful, polite, caring, and cooperative” will experience difficulties in school (Carlson, n.d., p. 47). Some of these difficulties include “being disruptive and off-task in the classroom, playground fights, and lower grades” (Carlson, n.d., p. 47). These students will often be rejected and labeled negatively by teachers and peers, leading to an increase in delinquent behavior. In addition, school failure may lead to “higher rates of drop-out, delinquent behavior, and subsequent lifelong problems as adults” (Jolivette, Swaszowski, McDaniel, & Duchaine, 2016, p.

10). Adolescents that drop-out of school are therefore more likely to become a part of the juvenile justice system, than their peers who stay in school. Of the juveniles who have been detained, only 43% successfully reenter school, and of those, only 1.6% of juveniles who reenter school actually graduate from high school (Jolivette et al., 2016).

Therefore, after exploring how the community affects an adolescent's chances of ending up in the juvenile justice system, I believe the best solution to treating these juveniles would be rehabilitation. While some argue that these juveniles need to be punished for their actions, many would argue that they need reformation. Many of these wrongdoers, who lived in poor neighborhoods, were never able to receive the help they needed because of a lack of money. I believe it is important that these juveniles have access to treatment options and services while they are staying in juvenile facilities. One statistic shows that "among youth with a documented mental health issue that are incarcerated in residential placement facilities, 47 percent have not met with a counselor" (Gottesman & Schwarz, 2011). In addition, I believe that these juveniles need access to schooling while in the system so that they can stay on track. By providing these wrongdoers with things they were never able to have or experience, they may feel as if they have more control over their lives.

Moreover, it is important that once juveniles are released from these rehabilitative facilities, they are slowly transitioned back into their community. I believe that there should be programs available to help these delinquents enter back into school or find jobs. If these juveniles were involved in gangs or other delinquent behaviors in their community, I believe they should be moved into a different community where crime rates are lower.

Another major factor that needs to be considered when dealing with juveniles is mental disorders. In recent discussions of the juvenile justice system, one controversial issue has been

the major role that mental disorders play within the system. Previous studies have shown that within juvenile facilities, “two-thirds of males and three-quarters of females have been found to meet the criteria for at least one mental health disorder” (Stoddard-Dare, Mallett, & Boitel, 2010, p. 209). Many of the delinquents that have been diagnosed with mental disorders, have been exposed to trauma at some point in their lives. “Some research estimates that 75 to 93 percent of youth entering the system each year have experienced some degree of trauma” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017). The number of juveniles with mental disorders is so high, because many of these juveniles have trouble accessing mental health services to help control their disorders.

Some of the most common disorders that juveniles are found to have include “substance use disorders, disruptive disorders (including conduct disorders, ADHD, and oppositional defiant disorder), anxiety disorders, and mood disorders (including manic episodes and depression)” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017). Many delinquents often have more than one disorder or co-existing mental disorders. After analyzing juvenile facilities, one study found that “the odds of a youth with bipolar disorder being detained for committing a personal crime is more than eight times higher than those of a youth who does not have this disorder” (Stoddard-Dare et al., 2010, p. 210). These mental disorders often vary in how the child acts, and makes the process of diagnosing and treating some disorders harder than others. “ADHD and conduct disorders include primarily externalizing actions and behaviors” (Stoddard-Dare et al., 2010, p. 211). In other words, this behavior is usually observable and therefore easier to diagnosis. On the other hand, “bipolar disorder is considered an internalizing and externalizing disorder” due to the hypomanic and depressive symptoms (Stoddard-Dare et al., 2010, p. 211). The altering behaviors and symptoms therefore make it harder to diagnose. In addition, children who have

mental disorders often present different symptoms than adults, which also makes diagnosing the disorders more challenging.

Although many of these juveniles have mental disorders, the juvenile justice system fails to effectively address the issue. One problem within the system is that a lot of “law enforcement and school staff lack the training to identify disorders in youth” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017). The Juvenile Justice Information Exchange (2017) recommends that these professionals should be trained to “recognize symptoms, defuse situations, and give treatment alternatives.” By giving alternative treatment options, these delinquents can be diverted to other systems of care rather than the juvenile system. Because of the high rates of mental disorders, it is also recommended that screenings should occur “at all the critical stages of the juvenile processing, such as admission to facilities” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017).

Another critical issue with treating mental disorders within the system is funding. A study from 2003 found that “12,000 families in 19 states had relinquished custody of their children for the sole purpose of trying to get them the mental health services they needed; about 9,000 were sent to the juvenile justice system” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017). To help improve access to health care coverage, the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange (2017) recommends that the juveniles are enrolled in Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to avoid gaps in coverage. The Juvenile Justice Information Exchange also believes that juveniles need to be provided with “mental health and substance abuse treatment after they leave the justice system” (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017).

Because of the number of juveniles who have mental disorders, rehabilitation is the key to treating these juveniles. The only way to prevent these juveniles from becoming repeat offenders is by treating their mental disorders. Punishing these juveniles could put more stress

on them, causing their mental disorders to worsen. In other words, punishment would only make the situation worse because it would cause these delinquents to act out more. Many of these juveniles are unable to control their behavior, and in some cases, may not even understand that their behavior is inappropriate or illegal. Therefore, the staff at these facilities need to work with the juveniles to not only treat their disorders but also comfort these children and teach them right from wrong.

Solution

It has been found that the current system has many issues with the way it is run and its treatment of juveniles. In their 2002 report, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that “about 1.5 million youths under age 18 are arrested each year for crimes ranging from loitering to murder” in the United States (Ramirez, 2008). One major problem with the way the system is run now, is the number of reoccurrences within the system. One study from San Francisco on high-risk youths showed that juveniles that were “placed in an alternative program to detention were 26 percent less likely to be re-arrested upon completion to the program” (Ramirez, 2008). The increase in the number of juveniles has received national attention over the years, causing an increase in criticism. Much of the criticism is not meant to try and get rid of the system, but instead help to modify and improve it.

One opposing view, by Psychologist Sarnoff Mednick of the University of Southern California, is that punishment is needed in the juvenile justice system. He believes that there are too many cases in which juveniles have already committed a number of offenses before they make their way to jail (Reynolds, 1998). He argues that this is because judges do not want to throw kids in jail so they instead set them free (Reynolds, 1998). Furthermore, he believes that early punishment will be a better deterrence for the youth (Reynolds, 1998). While some may

agree with his argument, I disagree with it. The need for deterrence and prevention of reoccurring crimes does not mean that incarceration is the best option. There are many other ways the system could handle this problem, instead of sending these wrongdoers to jail. I believe these juveniles should be brought to rehabilitation facilities first, rather than jail or prison. Well-operating rehabilitation facilities can better accommodate for the needs of younger children, and give them the support and safety they need while working to correct their deviant behavior.

Another option, for less serious crimes, is parole. Parole will provide the wrongdoers with structure and order. This is shown by parole officers whose jobs include maintaining regular contact with wrongdoers and their families, and providing assistance and coordinating services for the juveniles (Bueche, n.d.). It will also make it easier for law enforcement officials to keep track of these wrongdoers. I would argue that parole would deter these juveniles, because if they were to commit another crime, they would have to face a more substantial consequence.

Although rehabilitation is important once the youth enters the system, it is also important to focus on early prevention. We should not rely strictly on the juvenile justice system or wait until after a child has committed a crime to take action. Changing behaviors after they have already been established is much harder than developing healthy behaviors at a young age (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014). Although law enforcement is critical to help minimize the violence, it is not enough. Other important factors that are critical to prevent deviant behavior before it starts, include “education, healthcare, and increasing the availability of resources for other community priorities” (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014, p. 16).

Furthermore, because children spend a majority of their time at school, it is important that they feel supported and safe. There needs to be a connectedness between students, families, teachers, and the school environment (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014). The schools should also provide activities that “include strategies and policies related to professional development of school personnel, ongoing engagement of students in prevention activities, opportunities for meaningful student and family participation, and teachers’ classroom management practices” (David-Ferdon & Simon, 2014, p. 19). These activities will help to increase adolescents’ social skills while also teaching them how to control and manage their behavior. I also believe that schools should provide students with after school activities, which would help to keep the kids out of trouble when school is not in session.

In the discussion of mental illness, I agree that training law enforcement and school officials is needed. Police officers and other law enforcement members are the first responders when a crime has been committed. Because many are not trained, they would most likely be unable to recognize if a wrongdoer has a mental disorder, and therefore may be unable to keep the situation under control. I also support the idea that juveniles should be screened during the admission process to rehabilitation facilities, and other major processes within the system. In addition, I believe that all juveniles should be screened for mental disorders, not just the juveniles who show certain symptoms or behaviors. This can be done by giving each juvenile a psychological evaluation when they enter a rehabilitation facility. In my opinion, this should be done because many juveniles may not have symptoms at the time of admission, or they could have a disorder that is harder to diagnosis. I also believe that funding plays an important role within mental health and the juvenile justice system. Without the proper funding, these juveniles cannot be properly diagnosed and will not be provided with the best treatment options. In

addition, I believe that programs and fundraisers should be set in place to help raise money for the funding of these systems.

Furthermore, I also agree that it is important for juveniles to continue to receive treatment once they leave the juvenile justice system. This will help to make sure that these delinquents do not fall back into their old ways or relapse. Along with this, I believe that juveniles that have been released should be required to continue treatment and follow up with professionals to continue to move forward with the rehabilitation process. Parole should also be used to keep track of these wrongdoers after they are released, to ensure that they are staying on the right path.

Conclusion

To find the most beneficial approach, it is important to look at the main factors that influence which adolescents are at the highest risk for entering the system. Because of factors such as brain maturation, family life, the community, peer influence, and mental illness, it is important that the juvenile justice system focuses on rehabilitation. Rehabilitation will help to restore the lives of juveniles and give them another chance. Most youth that are detained in juvenile facilities have been exposed to trauma either in the form of family or community violence (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, 2017). By undergoing rehabilitation, these children will have the ability to receive treatment for the trauma/violence they have encountered. However, the system also needs to focus on accountability and structure. Holding these delinquents accountable for their actions will teach these juveniles that what they did was wrong and it is not acceptable in society. This system allows for justice, while also insuring the protection and safety of juvenile delinquents.

The purpose of the juvenile justice system should be to help these delinquents, rather than punish them. Many of these wrongdoers could be rehabilitated if they were provided with the

help and resources to do so. In addition, many of these juveniles are young, and should not be given up on. Although it is not always the case, many of these juveniles do not know any better and they deserve the chance to be taught, so that they can change their lives around.

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