

THE OBSERVER



Monthly Publication

Volume 2 | Publication 14

Reporting Accurate and Objective Information Based on Facts, not Agenda-Setting Theories

Dominic Casey | Private Investigator

2:28 PM EST | June 1, 2010

Youth Without A Future

Life Skills - Blueprint for Juvenile Justice Reform

Part IV

[Part I](#) - [Part II](#) - [Part III](#)

If a message is given once, the brain [will only remember 10% of it one day later?](#) However, when the same message is given six times a day, the brain remembers 90% of it. It is important to repeat, recap, reinforce and review data with juveniles.

According to the [Juvenile Defender Delinquency Notebook](#) which is an advocacy and training guide , an estimated 50 - 75% of youth in a juvenile justice facility has a diagnosable mental health disorder; 30% of incarcerated youth have a disability that qualifies him/her for a special education; and 30-70% of incarcerated youth have learning behavioral or emotional disabilities...thus the Juvenile Justice System is often a "dumping ground" for children who are not receiving adequate mental health services. All children have the right to constitutional and statutory protections.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, reformers advocated protection for children due to the severity of the criminal justice systems. By the end of the twentieth century, 46 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia established juvenile courts emphasizing rehabilitation and opposing punitive measures. The state functioned as a guardian and the children were treated separately from adults within informal and non-adversarial proceedings. The role of the lawyer was often substituted by a probation officer and/or social worker who investigated and reported to the court. Judges were not always a legal professional. By the late 1960's new procedural protections within the juvenile justice system were incorporated by the U.S. Supreme Court since the informality of the juvenile court appeared to result in more punitive injustices.

The [Blueprint for Juvenile Justice Reform Report](#) states that the majority of incarcerated teens are not serious offenders. It appears the majority of offenders are charged with non-violent property or drug crimes and one third have violated a technical probation rule such as missing a curfew or truancy. Nearly 100,000 juveniles are released annually from juvenile incarceration and two thirds of the accused are youth of color.

During the 1990's punitive policymaking was the directive. In 1994 when Congress first enacted the zero tolerance policy which was originally aimed at students who brought weapons to school, the rates of juvenile confinement increased 48% while the nationwide juvenile arrest rate for major violent offenses decreased 33%.

The [Blueprint for Juvenile Justice Reform Report](#) " Over the past decade, however, disciplinary policies mandating severe punishments-suspensions, expulsions and referral to law enforcement- have been expanded in many districts to cover a broad canvas of student behaviors, including not only possession of weapons, drugs and alcohol, but also prescription and over-the counter medications and common objects

THE OBSERVER



Monthly Publication

Volume 2 | Publication 14

like nail clippers as well as making threats, truancy, tardiness, and vague, catch-all categories like “insubordination” and “disrespect.” Zero tolerance policies prematurely push struggling students out of schools and into the juvenile justice system, dramatically increasing its racial disparities. Some jurisdictions report that almost half of all their referrals to juvenile court originate from schools."

It appears that today's youth are missing ***basic life skill training***.

The [World Health Organization](#) has defined life skills as, "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life".

The [United Nations Children's Fund](#) (NICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) list ***problem solving and decision-making, critical and creative thinking, effective communication skills, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness building skills, empathy and coping with stress and emotions as core life skill strategies/techniques***

[The cost of incarcerating a teen is \\$100-\\$300 per day.](#) Incarceration is expensive and less effective for juveniles.

[North Carolina set a minimum age for juvenile incarceration at 6 yrs. old. 75% of the states have no law that specifies a minimum age under which a child cannot be adjudicated delinquent.](#) "Instead, the juvenile court statute typically defines a child as being younger than 18 or another age, without making any distinction between children facing delinquency proceedings and children under the jurisdiction of the court for abuse, neglect or other issues."

Our future is dependent on our youth. By reducing institutionalization and keeping our youth out of adult prisons, providing competent counsel without racial prejudice, assisting juveniles with special needs, creating smaller rehabilitative centers that would generate more individual care and giving our youth family and community support, our future has a more positive outlook. Basic life skill training is the key to reducing juvenile incarceration.