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The Effect of Early Intervention on Reducing Recidivism

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ABSTRACT

The current punishment-based system has not led to promising recidivism rates showing the lack of effect it has on changing behavior. By working to understand the effect interventions can have on reducing recidivism, society can improve the criminal justice system. The intention of this paper is to show the benefits of moving to a system focused on rehabilitation instead of punishment, specifically for juvenile offenders. By conducting a literature review of available research, it can be seen that an incarceration-based system is not as effective as the implementation of intervention and prevention methods can be. Cognitive behavioral therapy and community-based programs have been observed to be the most effective of these programs at this time. With more work to change the system and the improvement of the implementation of these programs recidivism rates for juveniles could decrease from the current incarceration-based system.

**Keywords:** Interventions, juvenile delinquency, preventions, recidivism, incarceration, criminal justice.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of America, there has been a claim to focus on fairness and justice. Society has worked to make this a reality, but has often failed to treat the country’s children justly. For instance, not until the early 19th century was the criminal justice system for juveniles separated from the adult system, and “children as young as 7 years old could be tried in criminal court and, if convicted, sentenced to prison or even to death” (McCord et al., 2001, p. 157). Over time, recognition that children are developmentally different has grown. Current thinking considers that children are better able to change and reform, leading to a time when juveniles
who were brought before the court were assumed to require intervention and guidance instead of punishment. Nonetheless, the juvenile justice system became similar to its adult counterpart, with many children being sentenced to time in correctional facilities.

One premise which the justice system relies on, is that a prison sentence leads to justice and reform, and once the time for the crime is served, individuals can go back to leading productive, prosocial lives. When the system fails, a person returns to criminal behavior and recidivates. Recidivism is the tendency for a convicted criminal to commit another crime. Determining what the juvenile recidivism rate truly is can be difficult as national statistics are not available for juvenile offenders. However, a study by an MIT economist found that 40 percent of juveniles sentenced to juvenile detention ended up in prison by the age of 25 (Sweeney, 2015).

With high rates of recidivism, there needs to be a better understanding of intervention methods available and how they can benefit society. Interventions are programs that work to intervene and stop unwanted behaviors compared to preventions that work to stop any behavior before they happen. By increasing early intervention methods and moving away from incarceration, juveniles’, recidivism rates may decrease (Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov, n.d.). This is due to the impact incarceration has on juveniles’ health, developing minds, education, and, therefore, their careers (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023). Recidivism hurts everyone in society, from the individuals who are locked away to the taxpayers who foot the bill. With the recidivism rate of 40% mentioned previously, incarceration has been shown to not be effective in reducing juvenile recidivism. The focus of this paper is to shift to investigate different intervention methods that work better to improve the lives of juvenile offenders, crime victims, and taxpayers. More work is also needed to implement prevention programs that prevent juveniles from even starting criminal behaviors. This paper will discuss interventions used
specifically for juveniles involved in the justice system as well as more extensive community efforts to implement interventions to decrease juvenile delinquency.

COSTS AND IMPACT OF RECIDIVISM

With a 40% recidivism rate by the age of 25 for juvenile delinquents there is a good chance for a juvenile to be reincarcerated later in their life. It is estimated that by not addressing recidivism results in reduction of annual GDP by $65 billion nationally. (Vallas & Dietrich, 2014, p. 6). In 2019, the number of juveniles confined in facilities due to the criminal justice system in the United States was over 48,000 (Sawyer, 2019). For this population specifically, a survey in 46 states found the average cost of the most expensive confinement option is around $150,000 per person per year; it is estimated that the long-term costs of confinement for all juveniles are between $8 and 21 billion each year (Incarcerating youth could cost taxpayers more than $8 billion a year 2015). If our system changed to focusing on working to reduce recidivism, particularly in juvenile offenders, the county could save a lot of money from not having so many people incarcerated. There is also the fact that with high rates of recidivism, there is a high rate of crimes. By bringing down this statistic, fewer people will be victims of crime and be saved from psychological and financial stress. A lower recidivism rate will make communities across the country safer and allow for greater economic prosperity. By reducing the recidivism rate through supporting constructive intervention programs, the country can decrease the spending needed for the correctional system. Effective intervention programs can save taxpayers seven to ten dollars for every dollar invested, primarily due to reductions in incarceration costs (Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov, n.d.).

Recidivism also affects the families of the offender. Recidivism can lead to a disruption in an already challenged home and can leave children confused and angry. Repeated
incarceration also burdens the family financially as there is one less person to make money and care for dependents. This financial stress is on top of any fines given by the court system. Families can also decide to cut off the offender from their lives, which can lead to negative relationships with children. As male offenders make up about 90% of the population of incarcerated people, fatherless children are anywhere from 3 to 20 times more likely to be incarcerated than children raised in dual-parent households (Fact sheet: Fatherhood and crime 2023). This can lead to another generation of people spending their lives involved in the criminal justice system.

**ALTERNATIVES TO JUVENILE INCARCERATION**

Interventions should focus on juveniles, specifically, as their brains are still developing. Juvenile brains are not fully developed when they commit crimes and enter the criminal justice system. This evidence was used in Roper v. Simmons, where the Supreme Court mandated in 2005 that capital punishment for individuals under 18 is unconstitutional. This decision shines light on the idea that juvenile brains are still developing. Highlighting the negative impact of incarceration on youths and supports limiting incarceration for developing juveniles. As their prefrontal cortexes, which control executive functioning, are still developing into one’s 20’s, incarceration tends to have a significant negative impact on development. This negative impact will be discussed in the next section. In addition, young brains are more plastic (i.e., capable of change) than adult brains, increasing the impact of interventions.

Intervening when an individual’s brain is more plastic significantly impacts positive behaviors than later in life when someone is more fixed in their personality and behaviors (Molko & Gordon, 2022). Therefore, by focusing intervention strategies on juveniles, there would be a better chance of the method’s effectiveness. Current evidence on the effectiveness of
early intervention is not definite.; however, early interventions have been shown to leave a significant impact on those on the autism spectrum (Early Intervention for autism 2021) and children who have been diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder (Morshed et al., 2019). Although the consensus for early intervention is the sooner, the better, Dana B. Sarvey, MD, believes that interventions work better in adolescence than adulthood due to the still developing frontal lobe, which is susceptible to environment and experience (How to set up your kids for success: Focus on their mental health 2023). Intervening earlier in development also creates the space for a juvenile to talk about any trauma they have experienced and for trained counselors to help them with other psychological issues they are experiencing before they become chronic (Berko, 2021). This can help curb the need individuals may feel to self-medicate through abusing various substances to help with their physical or psychological issues (Miller & Aleem, 2012).

Interventions done earlier in life are more effective in changing behaviors and thoughts due to the brain’s plasticity than later in life.

IMPACT OF INCARCERATION ON JUVENILES

The current system of focusing on putting juveniles in correctional facilities has led to many deficits in their education, mental development, and health (Mendel, 2023). Incarceration has a severe effect on a juvenile’s educational success. A national study found that incarceration before the age of 17 reduced the likelihood of teenagers graduating from high school by 26% (Mendel, 2023). This rate can be compared to the 16% reduction for the graduation rate for the juveniles who were arrested but not incarcerated (Hjalmarsson, 2008). Although many factors contribute to this percentage, such as familial or financial needs, incarceration amplifies it. According to Knefel (2015), juveniles can miss a lot of school depending on the length of their trial. Returning to school can also be difficult for juveniles as many of the credits they gain
during their time in the justice system will not transfer back to public school. Many juveniles also struggle to find a school that will allow them to attend (Knefel, 2015). This lack of high school completion will impact these children’s career outlook as many jobs prefer those with high school diplomas, and it has been found that those who do not graduate high school report more health concerns than those who do graduate (High School Graduation).

Juveniles who have been incarcerated struggle with many physical and mental health problems. A national study of youth in custody found that two-thirds of the individuals had one or more physical health problems. (Hill, 2023). With high rates of incarcerated individuals and a lack of funding, the criminal justice system has problems of overcrowding. Considering the small area for a large population, illnesses can spread throughout a facility, making it a high-risk setting for the transmission of diseases (Beaudry et al., 2020, p. 12). Many facilities lack sufficient staff, making it hard to get the staff to take an inmate to outside medical appointments. On top of these issues, it is well documented that within correctional facilities, violence can be everywhere (JJIE Staff, 2023); despite there being no easy way to know how much violence actually occurs. This can lead to various injuries impacting an individual’s life for years or the rest of their lives. As there is currently little support available for mental health needs in correctional facilities, the impact stress plays on individuals who are incarcerated is significant.

Stress is known to greatly impact a person’s health, ranging from the most major bodily systems to reproductive systems for both the short and long term of someone’s life (Stress Effects on the Body 2018). Provided that mental and physical health can be severely impacted by incarceration, it is essential to try and intervene to keep them out of this environment.

Mental health is also severely impacted by incarceration, through removing individuals from society and consistent exposure to conflict and violence (Kraut, Minors in custody – mental
health issues). Humans, juveniles especially, do best when they have a sense of structure and safety in their lives. This does not happen when a facility is overcrowded, as there is a “significant strain on the daily routines of inmates, disrupting the structured environment intended for rehabilitation” (Prison Life: Daily Routines and Inmate Culture - iResearchNet, 2024). Problems with overcrowding in correctional facilities in America have been a known issue, and it is no different for juvenile correctional facilities. Being put into a facility without enough space can increase stress and decrease a person’s individuality. Recently there was a report that juveniles were sleeping on the floor at an institution in North Carolina due to overcrowding issues (Bergin et al., 2023). This deplorable treatment lessens a person’s feeling of self-worth and can lead to negative emotions; without proper coping skills, this can promote mental illness and violence (Prison Overcrowding, 2021).

Violence and conflict can also have a significant negative impact on a person, both physically and mentally (Crime and Violence). Beyond this, the environment of taking away someone’s autonomy and sense of purpose can damage a person’s idea of their worth (Cunha et al., 2023). Without being able to do anything on their own or make choices for themselves, people who are incarcerated will have a hard time leaving incarceration because of the sense of dependence that was fostered during their time behind bars (Haney, 2001). This can also lead to problems with lack of stimulation and boredom, which also creates negative feelings. Feeling a sense of helplessness and lack of purpose can lead to anxiety and depression (Purpose in life can lead to less stress, better mental well-being, 2023). Currently, there is an effort to research a condition called post-incarceration syndrome. This condition shares many similarities with post-traumatic stress disorder, which is a well-known psychological condition that can occur when someone goes through a traumatic event or events (Cunha et al., 2023). Post-incarceration
syndrome is characterized by the trauma of incarceration, separation from loved ones, subjection to attacks, and being locked away for various amounts of time (Weill-Greenberg, 2023). With this significant impact on mental and physical health, there should be an increased effort to investigate and implement intervention methods that are less harmful to individuals than incarceration.

**EARLY INTERVENTION METHODS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS**

This section will discuss, existing intervention methods and programs for juveniles who have been involved in the justice system and programs and their impact on recidivism. Many studies show that incarcerated youth have higher rates of reincarceration compared to the youth who are offered other alternatives (*Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov*, n.d.). These early intervention alternatives focus on diversion or community-based programs that allow juveniles to stay in their communities (*Community based alternatives*). Other methods include cognitive-based therapy, as well as other therapies and other need-based programs (Greenwood, 2008). Many of the programs that are used in early intervention are designed to provide youth with positive, prosocial experiences and opportunities to learn and develop new skills alternatives (*Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov*, n.d.). In the broader scope of the community, various programs work to target juvenile substance abuse and delinquent behavior. These programs are also designed to prevent juveniles from negatively expressing their feelings and to help them think more about the positive outcomes of the program they are in (*Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov*, n.d.). Liddell, Clark, and Starkovich (n.d.) stated that effective programs should also focus on helping juveniles with social situations and monitoring and assisting in changing impulsive or withdrawn behaviors. Effective programs should also allow youth to see their abilities and skills to build their confidence and provide a place where
juveniles can rely on strong, caring relationships with the staff or community members (Liddell et al., *Ch.10 Effective Programs and Services*).

Diversion Programs are one of the most used alternatives to incarceration, and there are various programs aimed at addressing delinquent behavior in the community (Johnson & Ali-Smith, 2022). These services include practical skills such as education classes for parenting and school, job skill training, service-learning projects, and recreation sports (*Youth Diversion - Department of Youth Development*). They also have programs focusing on mental health-related factors such as crisis intervention, mental health treatment, substance abuse education, and family support (*Diversion Programs | Youth.gov*, n.d.). A meta-analysis by Schwalbe, Gearing, MacKenzie, Brewer, and Ibrahim, R. (2012) discussed how this work is done through the use of five programs: case management, individual treatment, family treatment, youth court, and restorative justice. During the analysis, these five programs showed that in their current state, family treatment and restorative justice with the active involvement of researchers led to a statistically significant reduction in recidivism. These findings show that the current state of juvenile diversion programs still needs to advance specifically with a focus on direct psychosocial interventions and behavioral programs (Schwalbe et al., 2012).

According to the article *Community-Based Alternatives* (n.d.), community-based programs are similar to diversion programs and often include intensive work with the juvenile where staff is actively involved in the juvenile’s life from their school, home, and other places of interest. Therapy is also offered, and one of the types offered is Functional Family Therapy, where the therapist provides short-term family intervention service for around 30 hours and works to reduce recidivism anywhere from 20-60% (*Community based alternatives*). They also provide different therapies like Multi-systemic Therapy, where a therapist works around the
clock as a support person and as someone to ensure family communication is happening and that the youth is interacting with a positive peer group (Zajac et al., 2015). With the right people involved with this type of intervention, this is a far better alternative to incarceration and allows for time to address the issues that led to the behaviors and resolve them instead of singly punishing them.

One of the most commonly used intervention methods in the criminal justice system is cognitive behavioral therapy, which is known as the most effective intervention in adults and juveniles (Greenwood, 2008), as shown in a review of Proven and Promising Programs and Strategies. This method is a mix of two psychological fields of behaviorism and cognitive approaches and focuses on the idea that a person’s thoughts are the result of their experiences and behavior is a result of these thoughts. Observations show that criminals have distorted thinking based on their experiences, and this method works to correct these dysfunctional thought processes and reflect a more constructive reality. This is done by providing and teaching skills that can be practiced in managing behavioral and emotional problems. The method teaches individuals accountability for their actions while providing ways for these behaviors to change to become more pro-social. Baldwin, Chablani-Medley, Marques, Schiraldi, Valentine, and Zeira (2018) stated that many different approaches incorporate cognitive behavioral therapy, in particular a program called “Thinking for a Change,” which consists of 25 two-hour long classes focusing on cognitive change, social and problem-solving skills. This approach is being used throughout American correctional facilities and is effective for individuals who have a low or medium risk of returning to jail while being less effective for high-risk individuals (Baldwin et al., 2018).
The following method that is going to be discussed targets juvenile substance abuse, as substance use can be illegal and can also contribute to negative behaviors. Soberay and colleagues (2021) investigates an intervention method focusing on drug use prevention: Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT). This method is used in the health care setting, is an evidence-based practice, and is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics as a part of routine care for adolescents. The method was made to respond to substance misuse through the use of screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment. Age-appropriate screening is used to detect substance use in adolescents to prevent, reduce risk, identify, and treat substance use. When a screening interview indicates substance use, a brief intervention is provided, and a referral for further treatment may be provided. There has been a significant decrease in reported substance use when a follow-up screening is provided (Soberay et al., 2021). The interventions being provided are designed to guide participants to identify goals and values and increase motivation to address substance use (SBIRT: Screening, brief intervention & referral to treatment). By implementing such a system with both juveniles in the justice system and out in communities could lead to an interception to any substance abuse problems in the early stages and reduce the risk of criminal behavior leading people into involvement in the criminal justice system.

Outside of America, Sweden has seen success through the ‘Treatment Foster Care Oregon Program.’ As reported in the article, Costs and benefits of an early intervention for juvenile offenders – The ‘Treatment Foster Care Oregon Program’, the program identifies children with behavioral problems who are placed in an out-of-home placement. These placements provide programs that consist of individual and family therapy for the biological parents. There is a focus on positive reinforcement, and foster parents use a reward-based system to encourage good
behaviors. The goal of the program is to reduce antisocial behavior and reunite youths with their biological parents. This program has about 18 studies, which support the idea that this program reduces criminality and time spent in correctional institutions. This program has been observed to have a positive long-term investment of $31,092 per participant. There was also medium support that this program reduces substance abuse, improves mental health, and reduces criminal contacts (Vimefall et al., 2022). Introducing this type of intervention in America may be difficult as finding the needed number of foster families willing to house these types of juveniles may be challenging. Even with this drawback, using this program may be able to offer a new way to positively change juveniles’ lives instead of harming them through incarceration.

**CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS TO THE INTERVENTIONS**

The biggest challenge of implementing any effective intervention strategy would be the economic costs involved with the implementation. Research will add to the total cost the justice system needs from taxpayers. By implementing more programs, the system will also be adding to what it already does currently while trying to move away from incarceration over time. These added costs can vary, but the biggest would involve hiring and training qualified people to perform the interventions, ranging from less than ten dollars to around 50,000 dollars (Aos et al., 2004). Even with this cost to train staff, the average cost of confinement for a juvenile is around $600 a day compared to a community-based program that could cost as little as $75 a day (Sticker shock 2020: The cost of youth incarceration 2020).

Another challenge to implementing interventions is the individuals’ willingness to complete the treatment. Qualified staff can make clients feel supported, making them more likely to engage (Darker et al., 2024). An intervention method is only as good as the willingness of the participant, so if an individual cares and wants to change, these are effective, but the program is
limited to only being able to help those who recognize they need it and, therefore, will never be effective for everyone. An example of a qualified staff who is able to gain effective participation is Zoë Berko (2021), who works within a secure juvenile detention center. While explaining his methods of treatment, he explained how he works to build a therapeutic relationship with the boys he works with and focuses his treatment style by using Multi-Systemic Therapy and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. As many of his clients did not trust the system, clinicians, or both, he uses honesty and explains that their relationship would be as similar to a therapeutic relationship in a big office as possible. He uses methods like Google Maps to get clients to show him their world and uses different versions of play to discuss feelings. Traditional therapy can be effective in institutions if the clinician is able to build rapport with clients who struggle with trust and forced treatment. This type of individualized therapy addresses what juveniles experience and what they need to build better-coping skills and acceptance of what they have been through, allowing for their specific needs to be met (Berko, 2021).

In many cases, research on intervention methods focuses on specific categories, such as adult males, adolescents, and others, leaving room for the data to be inconsistent for the entire population (Beaudry et al., 2021). Without considering these variables, it is plausible that programs vary in their effectiveness depending on the population. Measuring the recidivism rates for juveniles is challenging because recidivism is measured by county or state, and due to the lack of shared information, if someone commits a crime elsewhere, their repeated offence may not be included in the data (Ruggero et al., 2015). Understanding the effectiveness of a program is therefore limited due to incomplete data.

Finally, the communities these juveniles are coming from also create a cycle of behavior, as low-income juveniles are more likely to commit crimes because of psychological stress and
other factors they experience (Reed, 2023). There is also a cultural mindset of punishment over rehabilitation for lower socio-economic communities leading to a need for culturally sensitive methods that account for cultural practices that lead to delinquent behavior (Xiao & Huizinga, 2014). When a child is taken out of their community for treatment or offered intervention for a period of time within the community, they receive temporary support. When the juvenile finishes their programming, they return to the same environment they lived in before without support guiding them away from their past behaviors. Interventions will be less effective by focusing on the individual without addressing the issues in the community. Schools in low-income areas are already known for being a part of the School-to-Prison pipeline, which is where underfunded schools are becoming more reliant on police rather than staff to maintain discipline. (What Is the School-to-Prison Pipeline? | American Civil Liberties Union, 2008). Juveniles who return to school will struggle because if they make one mistake, they will end back up in the justice system, increasing the recidivism rate. When schools do not offer educational opportunities to keep children engaged and use police to deal with behavioral issues, children are not being offered a supportive community where they can learn and grow. This environment is challenging to escape for these underaged individuals and can lead to interventions not being effective or for juveniles to revert to past criminal behaviors due to the environment they are put back into. Prevention programs for at-risk children and in communities can begin to address this issue.

**PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

Prevention programs aim to stop negative behaviors before they escalate to lead to jailtime; these programs identify at-risk children or target entire communities. Lin, Flanagan, Varga, Zaff, and Margolius (2019) conducted an intensive study on comprehensive community initiatives. A community initiative is different from a single type of program because it connects
systems such as families, schools, government, social service agencies, and other local organizations. At the same time, this initiative has commonalities with community-based alternatives in which support is offered to youth throughout the different areas of their lives (school, mental health, etc). One published analysis (Lin et al., 2019) focused on six initiatives that worked to enhance prevention: the CSAP Community Partnerships: the Kentucky Incentives for Prevention Project (KIP); New Directions; the statewide rollout of the Communities That Care (CTC) model in Pennsylvania; the Community Youth Development Study (CYDS) of the CTC model; and PROmoting School-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER). These prevention programs were used in a variety of urban and rural settings. These prevention programs have been shown to have significant effects on the delay of hard drug use and a smaller impact on cigarettes and marijuana use, decreases in alcohol use, and fewer criminal behaviors. Although these initiatives show promise in helping reduce recidivism and reduce crime in general, currently, only a limited number of them exist, and obtaining reliable numbers to analyze is difficult. This comprehensive study was only able to look at the effectiveness of the programs for those in high school and did not extend beyond that age. With these limitations in mind, more work is needed to build a better information base about initiatives (Lin et al., 2019).

There are also early developmental programs that work with at-risk children under the age of five as discussed in the article Practice profile: Early developmental prevention programs for at-risk youths (2022). These programs focus on enhancing child parent or family well-being to prevent criminal justice involvement. This is implemented in different ways including at home visitations or through childcare options teaching children’s key skills from language comprehension to developmentally appropriate games. There were no details for how much these
services cost to offer; however, the services were offered to the child’s family until the age of five years old. When compared to a control group was seen to be effective in preventing later criminal behavior. This type of early intervention should continue to be researched and expanded to be offered in all early childcare settings to help set children on the right path for their future (Practice profile: Early developmental prevention programs for at-risk youths 2022).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT

Interventions still have a long way to go regarding improvements and research, and this section will discuss what can be done to improve them in the future. The first and most necessary change would be to verify the national recidivism rate for juveniles. Measuring the effectiveness of interventions is challenging when the recidivism rates being used to measure effectiveness are not accurate. By creating a national juvenile reoffending database, researchers will better understand the impact of interventions, allowing them to improve even more in the future. As good as having a national recidivism rate would be, a focus on using more than recidivism to measure success, as it can take years to see the results of a program based on recidivism rates as the outcome measure. By including other success measures, such as the community-reported decrease in substance use, delinquent behavior, or dropout rates, the impact of the interventions would be more timely and thorough, allowing for more improvement.

Many of the interventions that have been discussed here also have limited data regarding the number of programs able to be studied, leading to a small population size. With a more extensive population, more diversity-based treatments can be explored. As there are only so many programs that can be studied at the current time, it would be beneficial if intervention programs expanded to new areas. By using limited data, we do not get the full picture of how impactful an early intervention method is for individuals and communities. By increasing the
number of areas implementing programs and standardizing the implementation of interventions, it will be easier to understand what is working and what is not. As data rates are increased and verified, the better the chances are that interventions can be studied validly with increased generalizability. This will allow researchers and communities to focus on interventions that show high results compared to programs that do not.

As discussed previously, qualified staff must be involved in the implementation of interventions. This means that there should be a focus on recruiting qualified individuals to implement interventions with juveniles. These staff members need to be able to build a trusting, positive relationship with juveniles. While implementing a program, the staff need to understand the intervention they are using and the barriers juveniles will have to overcome to succeed in the programs. Additionally, the quality of the program will impact its effectiveness Lowenkamp, Latessa, and Smith (2006) researched program effectiveness and found that programs that adhered closely to evidence-based practices provided better results. This study showed that the program implementation, offender assessment, and evaluation were all important factors when it comes to program effectiveness. This will create an environment that allows juveniles to trust staff and be willing to participate in interventions. (Lowenkamp et al., 2006)

Finally, attention needs to be paid to the community the juvenile is in, and the quality of education children receive, especially in low economic areas. Society would benefit from working to eliminate the School-to-Prison Pipeline and allow children from all backgrounds the same educational opportunities. Negative behaviors begin early, both in the home and at school, and by paying attention to the quality of schools in these areas, these behaviors can be corrected before they lead to serious crime. A strong community needs to support all children’s needs and create a stable environment where children can learn how to treat others and behave
appropriately. Through community prevention programs, communities should see a decrease in crime and other negative behaviors. A supportive community that works together to guide children away from negative behaviors and encourages a healthy lifestyle will build a better environment for juveniles to return to and continue to utilize the interventions that were taught.

**CONCLUSION**

There are many situations where a juvenile deserves to go to jail; however, looking at recidivism rates over time, incarceration is not practical in preventing future crime. With the plasticity of the juvenile’s brain, interventions with younger people are believed to be more effective in correcting behavior before they reach maturity. The average cost of incarcerating one juvenile for a year is $150,000; however, the long-term effect of this confinement is estimated to cost $8 to 21 billion dollars for our country each year. With a juvenile recidivism rate of around 40%, our system needs more focus on intervention methods early in life that correct behaviors before they escalate. Implementing more effective intervention methods should lead to lower incarceration and recidivism rates. Currently, cognitive behavioral therapy is known as the most effective intervention for adults and juveniles (Greenwood, 2008). However, there needs to be a focus on how comprehensive community initiatives can impact areas as a whole. The limited data available show promise in creating a positive impact on both criminal behavior and substance use. However, understanding juvenile diversion programs still have much room to advance, specifically with a focus on direct psychosocial interventions and behavioral programs. These interventions do not come without their challenges, one of the main ones being that predicting the success of a program is not easy due to the difficulty of gaining accurate outcome data for this area. Another challenge is that qualified staff are needed to implement the methods effectively. To fix these problems, a focus needs to be placed on the creation of a national
juvenile recidivism rate and increasing the desire for people to work with troubled youth in intervention settings through financial incentives and proven success rates. Early intervention methods have been shown to be more effective in reducing recidivism than incarceration (Prevention and Early Intervention | Youth.gov, n.d.) and need to be investigated more for the betterment of society.


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