

Juvenile Delinquency

Name:

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Individuals under the age of 18 are legally considered minors. As such, when they commit crimes, depending on the seriousness of the crime and other factors, their sentencing and subsequent records are handled much differently than if they were considered adults. The main purpose for this difference in treatment is the idea of correcting behavior that contributes towards juvenile delinquency and helping set the youth on a path conducive to being a worthwhile, contributing member of society. However, much debate does take place on what kinds of sentencing should be given as well as when an individual should be tried as an adult, even though the individual may be younger than 18 years of age. The purpose of this paper is to explore the kinds of sentences that juveniles are usually given for various crimes.

One popular kind of sentencing given to juvenile criminals is referred to as a split sentence. A split sentence involves prison for a set amount of time, with a probationary period that involves completing public service work and reporting to a probationary officer to ensure that the juvenile is meeting all criteria to remain on probation. This kind of sentencing is associated with first-time offenders who commit minor infractions but require some prison time (Worrall & Siegel, 2012).

Another kind of sentencing often given to minors is referred to as weekend sentencing. Juveniles with weekend sentencing are allowed to work during the week and return to jail on the weekends. The purpose of such split-sentencing is to allow the juvenile to support himself to some extent while serving a prison term, reducing the cost of taxpayer dollars. In addition, the juvenile earns income, develops a work history, learns skills on the job, and is better able to return to society as a contributing member at the end of his sentencing (May, Minor, & Ruddell, 2007).

Although the purposes of handing down a split sentence to juveniles are meant to be helpful to the offender and contribute to the good of society, it has not been as successful as one would wish, with 60% of the offenders violating probation. Violations committed involve not reporting to the assigned probation officer and associating with known criminals. Breaking probation means returning to jail or prison for the remainder of the sentencing period (Siegel & Bartollas, 2010).

Split-sentencing has had more failure than success, but it is still considered preferable to full-time incarceration. Time out of jail, with proper supervision, means the opportunity to help youth to develop positive attitudes towards family relationships, meaningful employment, religious affiliations, and enjoyable past-times. All of these factors can help to shape an individual's perception of healthy, satisfactory living. It also contributes to a safe community in which to live. Time spent out of jail can be time used to turn one's life around in a positive manner (Siegel & Bartollas, 2010). Even so, some perceive split-sentencing to be disadvantageous. For one, the portion of the sentencing involving jail time cannot be reduced for good behavior because probationary time is already built in. Another concern is that to remain on probation, the offender must adhere to numerous conditions. A violation of any of those conditions for any reason means immediate return to jail.

In effect, the juvenile offender should carefully consider his options. If he takes the split sentence, he may find himself back in jail for any number of reasons that are tied into violating probation. Any time devoted to being on probation, though, does not count as time served, which means he is still faced with the full amount of time in jail, in addition to time spent on probation. Moreover, regardless of probationary status, the juvenile still has a criminal record. Finally, the

juvenile should consider the kind of facility he will be placed in for serving out his sentence. A juvenile center is not the same as a prison, and the juvenile might actually benefit from being in such a facility.

References

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