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JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

**The Youth Reformation Program**

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Master of Science in Criminology & Criminal Justice

Merrimack College

May 2021

## JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

### **The Youth Reformation Program**

Trends in juvenile delinquency has always been a political and criminal justice concern. Juvenile diversion programs are created by state legislatures and signed into effect by the law. It identifies different crimes and places offenders into categories. Where some offenders go right into the system and serve their time, others could receive diversion which may help them reform rather than serving time in jail or prison. In this paper, two different diversion approaches will be examined. First of which being the restorative justice approach, which is the approach where the main focus is addressing the hardship caused for all parties involved. However, at the same time as understanding this hardship the offender is still held responsible for the crime committed as well as taught the meaning of accountability. When using the restorative justice approach there are three main points which are respect, compassion, and inclusivity. By utilizing this approach, it allows for healing and reparation to take place before reentering the community. All in all, the restorative justice approach teaches these youths to learn from their mistakes in hopes they do better in the future. Next, is the court diversion approach which helps young offenders through their punishment and rehabilitation in hopes it will prevent further crime commission. When the court diversion approach was first developed in the 1970's, it was a way to achieve goals in the courts eyes from future offending. An advantage of court diversion is to use informal processing rather than going through the formal adjudication process. When utilizing informal processing, it is mostly for those juveniles that have committed less serious offenses, such as vandalism, shoplifting, simple assault and underaged drinking. Differences between both restorative justice and court diversion include the involvement of court liaisons, as well as the involvement with volunteers and law enforcement.

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Offenders are typically placed in a diversion program that best fits them based on a number of characteristics, such as age, location, and type of crime that was committed. Along with a fee from the courts, they will be sentenced to treatment, a more hands on diversion program, or both. Diversion can be less costly in comparison to other criminal justice proceedings, as treatment and counseling are less expensive than prosecution and incarceration. Lundman (1976) argues that diversion programs have a positive effect on juveniles, they were less costly, and were able to use costs on the implementation of new diversion programs. Three main components from the extant literature on diversion programs are the reduction of recidivism, comparing different approaches and their policies, and the effects these programs have on juveniles. Prior research finds that diversion programs are overall more effective in regard to costs, as well as rehabilitation.

When it comes to fitting a delinquent with a program it takes comparing and contrasting all options to find the best program. According to Palmer (1980), diversion programs have relatively low recidivism rates. From this research, there were a number of findings in how to better reduce recidivism by matching programs with juveniles in an effective manner. The first realization founded by Palmer (1980) is avoidance of negative labeling, which is the reduction of unnecessary social control, the reduction of recidivism, provision of service, and reduction of the justice system's overall costs. Palmer (1980) did research with a youth authority, and all seventy-four programs running in California. An analysis found that these programs were being cost effective when juveniles were matched properly in order to find the best programs to reduce recidivism effectively. Palmer (1980) wanted readers to understand that rehabilitation is an alternative to a sentence due to the fact that these individuals, if paired with the right program could rehabilitate them and reduce recidivism.

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In contrast, Blomberg (1983) disentangles the negative effects of diversion programs. Blomberg (1983) conducted a qualitative study by looking at all of the positive and negative outcomes of the programs that were studied. Typically, when deciding if offenders will go to a diversion program or not it is in the hands of the judges, however, in this study paralegals decided the cases. By allowing decisions to be made by paralegals, it allows all different options to be considered in the court system. These cases handled by paralegals also emphasize early identification factors that according to Blomberg (1983) treats the main problem head on. Lastly, a survey that was conducted by Wright and Dixon (1977) found that it was unfair to draw a valid conclusion on the whole youth population when every youth offender has committed their own offenses and has their own stories.

### **Restorative Justice**

The restorative justice approach is more commonly defined as an approach where the main focus is addressing the hardship that was caused by the crime. However, at the same time, program still holds the offender responsible for all their actions. By using this approach, it provides opportunity for the individuals that were directly affected by the crimes that were committed. From another standpoint, the restorative justice approach is based on the knowledge that crime is a violation of individuals, communities, and relationships. There are three main principles that the restorative justice approach is based on which are, respect, compassion, and inclusivity. This approach encourages these individuals to understand the meaning of accountability and allows for healing, reparation, as well as reintegration into the society for all parties involved. When it comes to juveniles, this approach would be greatly encouraged because it will teach these juveniles how to learn from their mistakes in hopes to reduce recidivism, rather than juveniles spending time behind bars.

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According to Walgrave (1995), experiments that had been conducted on restorative justice show that the approach is promising. Walgrave (1995) pinpointed two essential problems. First, being the retributive emotion and the instrumentalist illusion of the penal law. In the penal law, the infliction of harm on an offender is the most common with the objective of procedures of punishing the offender. The penal law views the restorative justice approach as a way around punishing offenders for what they have done. Punishment is seen no more than a secondary importance and the primary importance is helping these offenders learn from their mistakes. This is based on a naive view of humankind by assuming all individuals have good in them and just need to learn how to properly utilize it. The point of retribution is to be able to restore the moral balance for these offenders and learn from what they have done. Lastly, due to the differences between the restorative justice approach and penal laws, the restorative justice approach is viewed as not efficient enough. The second essential problem is irreconcilable contradictions in the rehabilitative law for young offenders. According to Walgrave (1995), what is seen wrong with this aspect is that all crimes will be taken at face value. However, using this approach allows for a social intervention to rectify social deviance by pinpointing personal problems with the young offenders and needs of young offenders as well.

The premise of fundamentals with the restorative justice approach is that all crimes are violations. According to Latimer (2005), the restorative justice approach can help deter young offenders from violating law. Latimer (2005) states that the most accurate description of the restorative justice approach is to repair the harm that had been caused by the wrongful act that was committed. From this point of view, the elements that are key consist of telling the truth, and having a face-to-face encounter with all parties involved. Models of the restorative approach can be grouped three different ways (1) circles, (2) conferences, and (3) victim-offender mediations.

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This process for juveniles should be voluntary. However, due to the fact they are taking the restorative route instead of serving time, all young offenders should be eager to take advantage of these opportunities. At the time this research by Latimer (2005) was concluded there were four different identified entry points to restorative justice programs. First, being police, then courts, corrections, and parole officers. Latimer (2005) found that a large majority of these young offenders were male and were measured based on victim satisfaction, offender satisfaction, restitution compliance, and recidivism reduction. Additionally, restorative justice compared to other programs was actually quite successful at achieving all of their major goals. In other words, according to Latimer (2005), restorative justice programs are far more effective when it comes to improving the satisfaction of the victim and/or the offender.

Overall, restorative justice is the most effective for young offenders however, what could be further researched in this area is the effect that the young offender compliance with restitution agreements has on victim satisfaction overall. The restorative justice claim is that the whole process is beneficial for both sides involved being the offender and the victim. When the offender is going through the restorative program, the recovery and healing of the victim is emphasized the most. This approach helps with the process of coming together to restore certain relationships with yourself, people around you and with the community (Latimer, 2005.)

Previous research has sought to answer question as to whether diversion programs reduce recidivism rates in a positive way and prevent delinquent behavior in the future. Lundman (1976) applied labeling theory to juvenile diversion programs. According to Lundman (1976), when the Juvenile Justice Act of 1974 was passed, it was created to increase further use of diversion programs because it would provide more funding to state and local projects. This Act was recently revised in the year 2018, based on the broad census that children, youth, as well as

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families involved with juvenile and criminal courts should be guarded by specific federal standards. This will benefit the family as well as the juvenile offender. The basis of the Juvenile Justice Act was built off the four D's, decriminalization, diversion, due process, and deinstitutionalization. Lundman (1976) concluded that as long as delinquency and diversion remain as a social focus, it will continue to work and only improve the benefits of the programs and decrease recidivism.

Similarly, research by Patrick and Marsh (2005) also examines the question of whether diversion programs reduce recidivism. Patrick and Marsh (2005) conducted a longitudinal study looking at how different programs affect recidivism differently. A group of first-time offenders were used as the sample and put at random into three different treatment groups. The three different treatment groups were, a nonjudicial diversion program, a traditional youth court diversion program, and a control group. Patrick and Marsh (2005) concluded that diversion programs were in fact not only the most cost effective, but effective at reducing recidivism, and preventing future deviant behavior by these juvenile offenders.

Lastly, a study conducted by Panzer (1997) investigated each specific sector to diversion programs and their effects, which could use improvements, and which are helping to reduce recidivism the most. Pre-trial diversion programs allow the courts, to not focus on the small offenses committed, but the rehabilitation of the juvenile. Pre-trial diversion programs not only benefit the offenders but also the community. Panzer (1997) found that parental involvement benefits the juvenile in the diversion process. However, the youth accountability board required parental consent in some states to move forward with the diversion process instead of incarceration. In conclusion, Panzer (1997) saw that having pre-trial diversion programs could, not only save money from sentence diversion and have more funds to use where it was needed,

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but benefit the individuals in these programs. Putting these extra funds toward the juvenile justice system, for example, would allow the hiring process of trained individuals in the community to work with and volunteer to help rehabilitate these juveniles. Therefore, diversion programs appear to be more cost effective in the long run and make for a more positive experience in hopes to reduce recidivism among young offenders.

### **Court Diversion**

The court diversion approach was first established to help these young offenders through their punishment and rehabilitation in hopes to save their life from going down a path of crime. These types of diversion programs and different policies first emerged in the 1970's as a way to achieve the goal of saving these young offenders from a future of crime. Aside from the potential negatives these diversion programs had, they were doing more good than harm for these young juveniles. Mears (2016) examined different diversion efforts, including the contemporary and civil diversion effects, which illuminate the tensions from traditional to contemporary. With court diversion, it is a large advantage for informal processing as they avoid an official record of adjudication that way. Also, at the same time, the juvenile court can then give far more attention to those youths who are involved in more serious offenses.

However, informal processing which is the central component of juvenile court has been argued to enable juveniles that have committed less serious offenses. Mears (2016) found that the juvenile court gives intake officers a wide discretion to determine whether these juvenile offenders should be dismissed, counseled, and released; diverted to a program; or placed on informal probation. If the court diversion approach is properly used, it will improve the lives of these young offenders and reduce crime and court costs. However, if court diversion is misused, it could leave a bad impression on the youths and not deter them from committing future crimes

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which will overall increase court costs due to recidivism Mears (2016) stated that diversion continues to be an available option in the juvenile courts and continues to expand. Diversion is central to decision making when determining how best to handle certain youth offenders.

However, there are negative components with the court diversion approach. According to Mears (2016), there is an inconsistent definition of diversion applied in the courts. Research has shown that some interventions through courts see diversion differently as others would. The result of the lack of consistency causes an external validity concern. For example, in some states, there is no distinct line between services, activities, and informal probation which can lead to problems. The second challenge is that the logic is unclear for achieving certain impacts on youth offenders (Mears, 2016.) Activities that are included in court diversion for juveniles do not have a precise understanding of what factors are being addressed. Without this clear logic, there will be risk when pairing certain youth offenders with certain activities or community service in hopes to rehabilitate the youth offender. These are just some of the issues that could arise while utilizing court diversion for juveniles, on top of many more that had been researched by Mears (2016.) Over the decades, diversion has improved, digressed and changed. Future research should focus on the inconsistency of the definition of diversion and what that entails. There are also unclear theoretical foundations for certain court diversion programs, for example, targeting a certain population of offenses, and the inconsistency of the implementation of diversion.

Moreover, Greenberg (2003) argued that the rates of severe mental health issues in correctional centers compared to the general population is far higher than normal. In the adult population, the court diversion approach has been defined as a transfer of mentally ill people from being in the system to the hospital or community mental health center. Through the court diversion approach, these professionals have the access to mentally ill or disordered offenders in

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order to help serve their mental health needs in hopes of bettering these offenders. A major difference between court diversion and restorative justice is quite distinct. Court diversion does not cause a discontinuation of the criminal charges but it does allow courts to be aware and informed of all their mental health patients that are suffering (Greenberg, 2003) which could have been the leading cause in committing this crime. Whereas restorative justice is community based and working on the healing process with the offender and the victim to grow past the crime committed.

According to Greenberg (2003,) there are positive and negative effects and outcomes to the service of court diversion. A negative effect is the dangerousness a mentally ill offender could pose. Court liaisons play a very important role when it comes to the court diversion approach. It is the liaison's job to facilitate the access to these community-based programs through the courts. Also, what comes with the court diversion approach is it is the judiciary, not mental health workers that determine the outcome of these offenders that are suffering from mental illness according to Greenberg (2003.) There is, however, a long-term benefit from utilizing this approach, which is the improved access to psychiatric treatment and care for the offenders that are mentally ill which led them to commit crime at the interface of the system itself. The population of the mentally ill offenders is a small but extremely under-serviced. Greenberg (2003) showed that this population has very specific needs and require resources in order to manage their very often complex and serious mental disorder problems.

In conclusion on the topic of diversion programs, there are both positive and negative effects to all programs. Some advantages to diversion programs are improving long-term community safety and reducing recidivism far more effectively than incarcerating an individual in prison (Gibbons, 1976). However, the most obvious positive to diversion programs is how the

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offenders avoid the expense and harshness of the full operation of the criminal law. According to Gibbons (1976), there are two goals when assessing the success of diversion programs. First, the reduction of the number of juvenile offenders are referred to go further in the system by law enforcement. Second, the overall reduction of juveniles entering these programs are not reoffending. Anderson and Schoen (1985) also weighed the positives and negatives of diversion programs, by specifically looking at both effects of diversion programs. They argued that diversion's objective is solely stigma reduction and that stigmatization is detrimental to juvenile offenders. It was founded by Anderson and Schoen (1985) that stigmas can create negative associations between juveniles and diversion programs.

In a different perspective, Osgood (1983) was able to avoid labeling of the juvenile offenders, reduce the social control and coercion, reduce the costs of diversion programs, to reduce recidivism, and to be able to provide services to these juveniles that have the potential to be deterred from future delinquency. Osgood (1983) found that there was not a strong relationship between prior arrests and the effectiveness of the programs. However, Osgood (1983) was able to pinpoint specific crimes that had the most positive recidivism rates from diversion programs. For example, offenders with more than one prior arrest were more likely to end up going through the system again and not being able to take part in a diversion program. Finally, a study conducted by Steadman and Naples (2005) analyzed six different jail diversion programs in order to identify the effects they had on recidivism and rehabilitation. Individuals who were diverted and those who were not diverted were compared and contrasted twelve months following diversion. What was found suggested to Steadman and Naples (2005) that the programs reduce time in jail, which is cost effective for the criminal justice system, without increasing the public safety risks for the communities involved. All of the programs that were

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examined had positive effects or even better for diverted individuals. Steadman and Naples (2005) identified a gender component whereas the majority of the diverted individuals were female. Overall, this data suggested four major key components: jail diversion works in terms of spending less mentally straining time in jail, it does not increase public safety while rehabilitation is taking place, diversion programs are linked to community-based services, and overall lowers criminal justice costs, as well as treatment costs.

### **Annie Casey Foundation**

About one hundred years ago, Annie Casey was a widowed woman raising her four children near Seattle. Annie's oldest was able to see and understand the struggles Annie faced in everyday life, as well as what she had to give up for her four children. Annie's oldest, Jim, dedicated the rest of his life creating this foundation in honor of his mother, serving the children and families of America that are in need. A documentary was aired to showcase the works this foundation has achieved, especially for young children that could possibly take the wrong path into crime commission. In 1907, the eldest son Jim started a messenger service to help support his mother Annie and his siblings which later on became known as UPS. The first program of the foundation was formed in 1948 which targeted disadvantaged children near the Seattle home. By the 1970's, the Annie Casey Foundation began to reach other states including New York, Connecticut, Maryland, and Vermont. Before Annie's eldest son Jim died in 1983, he stated "what is needed is a renewed determination to think creatively, to learn from what has succeeded and what has failed, and, perhaps most important, to foster a sense of common commitment among all those concerned with the welfare of children." The Annie Casey Foundation targets families of which their children are at risk of going down the wrong path. In 1985, the first executive director was named Marty Schwartz. Marty's tenure saw the launch of the

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foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and its goal to work with child welfare reform. From the start of the Annie Casey Foundation have come many more opportunities and initiatives within it. The "Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative" focuses on youth transitioning from foster care into society. This was linked with the consulting on child welfare and the juvenile justice systems. As of today, the Annie Casey Foundation continues to make improvements and create new initiatives that the foundation knows would make Jim extremely proud.

### **Suffolk County Juvenile Detention**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts created its first publicly funded juvenile correctional system in 1846. The first initiative taken was the opening of the Massachusetts State Reform School for Boys at Westborough which later became known as Lyman School for Boys. Aggressive juvenile reform started to take place around forty years ago and has proven to be sustainable and remains a main focus of the state's juvenile justice system today. From this reform came the creation of three important juvenile programs.

Involved with Boston Juvenile Delinquency includes juvenile curfews even though, according to research, the effectiveness of this curfew is debatable. Most court officials think enforcing a curfew is racially discriminatory. In prior research in New Orleans, there were 19 times more African Americans than that of White individuals. This could contribute to racial discrimination due to some racial and ethnic groups living in high crime and low-income neighborhoods, as they could feel targeted. Where the idea of a juvenile curfew is not effective in the sense of deterring crime however, it could deter with other dispositions like probation for example.

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Next, the GEAR-UP program is federally funded and is designed to increase the number of low-income juveniles who are prepared enough to enter high level schooling. This program targets four Boston Housing Authority developments between the ages of 14 and 17. These students have the opportunity to take classes at the University for credit in preparation and support in going to college. The GEAR-UP program does not turn juveniles away from crime but rather keep them occupied and off the streets. For some, keeping juveniles in the classroom is the only push they need to stay on the right path.

Lastly, the Scared Straight program takes a rather aggressive approach to juveniles that have committed offenses and are in the prison facility. For juveniles to hear stories from adults in this facility often becomes traumatizing to their mental health. By a juvenile being in prison and suffering from mental health damage could lead them to commit harsher crimes once released. From the juveniles seeing what life in prison would be like would essentially “scare them straight” hence the title of the scared straight program. This program can be effective depending on the juveniles in the program.

### **The Youth Reformation Program**

#### **Program Intake**

This program has been built with the main goal of empowering a group of young juveniles to take ownership of the crime they committed, build respect, and restore relationships with their community, friends, family and themselves. Juveniles considered for this program will only be of those who have committed minor offenses. Once they are formally heard in court, it will be up to the judge to decide if this program is fitting for this specific juvenile or if they should be sentenced in trial. From this reformation program, juveniles will learn more about what the word accountability means. To teach these juveniles the true meaning of accountability

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a number of steps will be taken. Juveniles will be shown that mistakes do in fact happen with everyone because we are only human. However, knowing this means the juveniles need to take responsibility for making amends with what they have done and teaching them right from wrong. By applying exercises of teaching right from wrong this could become instilled in them as many of these juveniles do not come from a positive home life. They will grow within themselves from learning from their mistakes, and engage in the community through various program activities. For example, juveniles will partake in an activity called a “think sheet,” which will ask numerous questions that they must then reflect on, “what did I choose to do?” “why did I make this choice?” “who did I disrespect by committing this act?” “and two things I could have done to prevent myself from doing this?” Juveniles often do not listen to law enforcement as they are usually seen as the “bad guys.” By using a restorative justice approach, it will not only help juveniles see law enforcement members in a different light, but have these juveniles use their time in a more productive way. Perhaps having more of a presence in the school system as an officer to be seen more as a resource than someone who is out to get you into trouble and catch you in the act. Having officers work with juveniles throughout this program, one on one, so these juveniles can get to know these officers as people and not just a “bad guy” with a badge. There will also be a mandatory consent form to fill out if factors of this diversion program are being used for research. As we are working with individuals under the age of eighteen.

### **Program Activities**

Stemming from the goal of providing help to young juveniles, a population of males and females from the ages of 12-17 in the Suffolk County area in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be targeted. In Suffolk County which serves Brighton, Charlestown, Roxbury, and South Boston for charges involving delinquency, harassment, criminal cases, care

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and protection, child requiring assistance, and jury trials. By targeting this population, research will be able to be done on differences in males and females and how they cope with diversion, as well as who they are when they leave the program. Reformation upon the completion of this program will play hand and hand with the goals and mission statement of the diversion program, which is preventing future crime and increasing public safety throughout the community, by holding these juveniles accountable while also providing resources and community-based activities needed to break the cycle of crime.

Some fundamental reasons that were founded as to why these adolescents are committing crimes is most likely due to the home life they are coming from. All juveniles in the program will follow the same rules and guidelines to achieve success in re-entering the community with low risk of recidivism. Some of these guidelines include financial restitution for the losses, the opportunity to voice their views and participate in a restorative justice process, learning about the circumstances that go along with the offense committed, and having a better understanding of the effectiveness of diversion in which it prevents future crime for these individuals.

A key aspect of this program are the offenses committed by juveniles to qualify for this diversion. Offenses could include but are not limited to vandalism, truancy, underaged drinking, selling certain controlled substances, shoplifting, simple assault, "joyriding" among others. Along with diversion programs it is more typical for those who have committed less serious crimes or it is their first offense. If it is your first offense, or first offense in five plus years that would make an individual eligible for this diversion program. As well as, if the individual was admitted to committing the offense and has accepted responsibility at that point will be considered for diversion. Juvenile offenders who also are eligible for diversion could also be recommended for treatment and put into a diversion program and not necessarily sentenced to a

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time period in prison. Of these less serious offenses diversion can serve as a good form of rehabilitation for these individuals for something like drug and alcohol abuse, a chance to get clean and understand why they are choosing this new path. An offender who is recommended for diversion and remains serving their time in the community can also retain his or her employment while in diversion. Some programs that will be available for these juveniles to take advantage of could be, victim awareness classes, service-learning groups around the community, job skills training when ready to re-enter society post diversion, mental health treatment groups, and crisis intervention groups. As well as completing an activity called “think sheet” all juveniles will partake in completing this. It will consist of a number of questions that need to be reflected and answered by the individual. Questions can include but are not limited to, “state the offense committed,” “why do you feel this offense got you to diversion and not prison?” “What have you learned from committing this crime?” “Why was this not the right thing to do?” “Do you feel as though you have improved from this program, and why?” As well as among other questions. By having these groups, programs, and activities available fulfills the main goals of rehabilitation and learning the meaning of accountability.

### **Exit and Graduation**

Once placed into the program, all juveniles will be assigned their own specific role and job. Whether it be cleaning the streets of the community, working with other programs, like elderly housing for example will give these juveniles chances to reform in the community. Being able to place these troubled juveniles in a community setting can hopefully help them learn more from the mistakes they made and redirect them to want to do good. By having these groups and programs available as mentioned previously fulfills the main goals of rehabilitation and accountability. With these services it can address underlying causes that are linked with such

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criminal behavior that was committed. However, interventions and diversion are seen as different, intervention is an option in this program to make it possible to address and learn from the offense, accept being held accountable, and why they are responsible for this given crime. What is most important in a program like this one is truly knowing the meaning of the term “accountability.” To do so a positive culture and environment is created within the program, in the end being able to admit the individual was in the wrong. Accountability is extremely important due to the fact that it helps these juveniles take responsibility for their actions, to learn from them, and help improve their actions and performance as an individual in the future post diversion program.

A set number of service hours are required to graduate from this diversion program. How service hours are set is on a case-by-case basis upon the offense committed by the juvenile. It could range anywhere from thirty hours to one hundred hours fulfilled by activities as stated previously. For example, victim awareness classes, service-learning groups around the community, job skills training when ready to re-enter society post diversion, mental health treatment groups, and crisis intervention groups, and the “think sheet” activity. Once service hours are completed a written reflection must be submitted to act as an “exit” paper. This paper will consist of no less than 1,000 words, properly formatted. This is the juvenile’s final chance to get their thoughts out on paper to include their feelings from the experience and what they learned. The objective of this exit paper is to see how the juveniles in the program have evolved through diversion to be able to discuss what they committed, how they understand it was wrong, what they learned from it, and what they will do in the future to better themselves and prevent it from happening again. Each reflection exit paper will be reviewed by the intake team of the program. By reading these, it will determine if these individuals are truly ready to enter into the

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community once again, or if they need further treatment to improve. What was learned from serving their time this way, how they felt throughout the program, and how and why they feel it bettered them as a person as an outcome.

### **Program Evaluation**

In order to improve this program as time goes on, a program evaluation will happen following each graduation. Having a program evaluation can determine resources that are still needed and if certain criteria should be laid out differently. Using a goal-based evaluation approach will determine pros, cons, and necessary changes that are needed. Moving forward, strengths and weaknesses will be chosen upon the graduation of the first program group comes to an end. By picking strengths it will show a few different points. First, by looking at the program goals will give you a predetermination of which of the goals set have been met. Second, it allows the evaluators to give their efforts on an individual needed basis. Lastly, by completing this evaluation will determine whether this program was successful or not and what needs to be altered in future groups. Weaknesses from this evaluation could include the data not being able to predict long term outcomes due to minimal data to begin with. Also, not producing specific objectives based on program goals.

To implement this evaluation specifically to this program will work a number of ways. Strengths from this graduating group from the program will be increased rehabilitation, a firm understanding of accountability, and taking responsibility for their actions. These strengths will be able to output what has been done correctly in favor of these juveniles. Weaknesses could include juveniles returning to their previous ways and committing crimes once out of diversion, no remorse toward what landed them in diversion, and not willing to cooperate and understand the meaning of accountability and taking responsibility for their actions. Taking these potential

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strengths and weaknesses will ultimately give the conclusional data of what needs to be improved and what can stay the same. Making these improvements and changes will allow different perspectives for future diversion program groups and continue to collect data to improve as the groups enter and exit the program.

### **Discussion**

In short, diversion programs are overall more effective in regard to costs as well as rehabilitation. Relevant trends in juvenile delinquency have always been an issue. Diversion programs are created by the state legislature and signed into effect by the law. Offenders will be specifically placed in a diversion program that best fits them based on a number of characteristics like age, location, type of crime that was committed and so on. Along with a fee from the courts they will be sentenced to treatment, a more hands on diversion program or both. Diversion can be less costly in comparison to other criminal justice proceedings, in regard to treatment and counseling being less expensive than prosecution and incarceration. Three main components from research done on diversion programs are the reduction of recidivism, comparing different programs and their policies, and the effects these programs have on juveniles in the long run.

Where some offenders go right into the system and serve their time, others could have some unseen potential and are thought that diversion might help them reform rather than serving time in jail or prison. In this paper, two different diversion approaches were examined. First of which being the restorative justice approach, which is the approach where the main focus is addressing the hardship caused for all parties involved. However, at the same time as understanding this hardship the offender is still held responsible for the crime committed as well as taught the meaning of accountability. When using the restorative justice approach, there are

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three main points which are respect, compassion, and inclusivity. By utilizing this approach, it allows for healing and reparation to take place before reentering the community. The restorative justice approach teaches these young juveniles to learn from their mistakes in hopes they do better in the future.

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