

Alternatives to Incarceration

Name

Institutional Affiliation

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Underlying historical and economic reasons behind the quest for alternatives to incarcerating offenders in jails and prisons.

The federal and state governments have been looking for means to invest more funds in public health and public safety outcomes at the same reducing the criminal justice and corrections. The government has come up with a number of factors designed to reduce criminal justice spending on prisons or jail and at the same time improving the safety of communities. Justice reinvestment is regarded as an alternative to incarceration. Most of the states are reducing their cuts on spending and focusing on corrections spending. Through establishing the driving force behind the increasing number of prisoners, the state can determine how the growth might be stopped. States have come up with new policies aimed at achieving slow growth in the prisons and downsizing of corrections systems increasing savings. The money saved is then channeled back to community support programs such as substance abuse treatment (Winokur Early et al. 2010).

Alternatives to incarceration that juvenile courts currently use

Day or evening treatment is a community-based program that provides intensive supervision to the offender. The offenders are supposed to report to a specific facility at a given moment during the day or night. The visits continue for a certain number of days or weeks. The offenders are allowed to return home at night. For example, AMIkids is a community-based service which offers treatment services aimed at reducing recidivism. During the day, the kids receive intervention services, and at night, they are released to go to their foster families as a means to involve them in the treatment process. It helps to improve the juvenile behaviors and reduce their exposure to criminal activities (Winokur Early et al. 2010).

Home confinement is a community based program designed to reduce criminal activities. The offenders are allowed to live at home, attend school and attend to any other responsibilities. During such events, the offenders are electronically monitored to ensure they comply with the conditions set by the courts. Individuals under this type of confinement operate on a strict schedule only stipulated by the courts. For example, offenders in Florida wear a tamper-resistant bracelet which they carry it everywhere they go. The bracelet transmits signal to the monitoring center (Bales et al., 2010).

Intensive supervision programs (ISPs) are community-based programs that provide intensive monitoring of offenders. They normally have strict conditions for compliance with the offender having frequent contacts with the probation officer. For example, the offender has to visit probation officer on a daily basis. The program involves high risk-control strategies such as urine tests, electronic monitoring and evening visits. The individuals that are observed to possess a high risk to the society are institutionalized (Austin, Johnson & Weitzer 2005).

Significant societal and individual benefits of imposing sanctions or punishments

The act of imposing sanctions or punishment while the offender remains with his family helps the individual continue with his or her daily activities. During this time, the offender also provides community services. The community also benefits since there is a reduction in taxpayer's money. The offender gets to retain more privacy than if he/she was taken to prison or jail. He or she gets to offer the community with more service at no cost. Some of the activities include removing debris from parks and building of community gardens among other services. The offenders remain accountable for their actions at the same time reducing prison crowding (Bales et al., 2010).

References

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