

Meeting Children's Needs: Alternatives to Criminalization in WA

The Issue

Prosecution in juvenile court is not an evidence-based response and, instead, is associated with serious and predictable harm. Involving children in the criminal legal system is developmentally inappropriate, increases recidivism and negatively impacts the children's stability later in life.

“Failure to set a meaningful standard of juvenile court jurisdiction results in the criminalization of childhood”

-American Bar Association

Alternatives to juvenile court can offer an evidence-based, community-oriented approach to handling situations that may otherwise harm children. These programs have demonstrated short and long-term benefits for children using the services as well as the health of the community.

Diversion Programs: Solutions in Action

Youth Impact: Diversion in Spokane County

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Community benefits: neighborhood accountability board facilitates restorative response to harm by centering community.

Diversion (vs court) better serves children: confidential and private, less expensive, & less time-consuming. Diversion records, an agreement reached during arbitration, are not a conviction and can be both sealed and destroyed.

“Allows community to assume responsibility for juvenile crime problems & makes the youth accountable to the community for [their] behavior”

"Choose 180:" King County School Based Diversion

Supports youth success by preventing suspensions & expulsions by keeping kids in school and supporting their families.

Vision: to **disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline** by keeping youth in school, building relationships with campus leaders, & teaching skills to prevent future disciplinary actions.

Impact: since 2011, *Choose 180* helped **2,500+ youth** find a new life path, instead of becoming system-involved.

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