



## Physical Anthropology Section - 2013

### I25 Early Intervention Programs to Prevent Serious Juvenile Delinquency

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After attending the presentation, attendees will be exposed to research-tested methods for reducing juvenile delinquency recidivism and, more importantly, to understand research supporting interventions for early prevention of this delinquency.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by educating attendees on the status of the scientific research in the prevention of delinquency.

This presentation will discuss the prevailing failed attempts at preventing juvenile delinquency and its recidivism. The predominant method for dealing with juvenile delinquents in the last three decades has been to treat many as adults with harsh sentencing.

Recognizing the developmental aspect of juveniles as distinct from adults, the first juvenile justice system was established in 1899 in Illinois and led to the creation of the first child and adolescent psychiatry clinic in 1909 in Chicago. This clinic was specifically created to aid the newly formed family courts in their adjudication of "wayward youth." Eventually all 50 states adopted these special courts to handle juvenile delinquency outside of the adult criminal courts. The goal of these courts was to help the youth return to a healthy path of development. Hence, there was no sentencing, only adjudication of the youth "for their betterment." Until *In re Gault*, children and adolescents in family court had few of the safeguards afforded to adults charged with crimes. Since the 1970s, with the dramatic rise in violent crime committed by adolescents, many juveniles have been returned to the jurisdiction of adult criminal courts. Society was outraged to see juveniles murder and rape and be released from custody at the age of 21 years, and further to have the juvenile records sealed. In some jurisdictions, the juvenile may begin in family court and be waived up to adult criminal court. In other states, such as New York, adolescents who commit specific crimes of violence or with a weapon are immediately sent directly to adult criminal court. Society has sought to reduce juvenile crime with longer incarceration with only modest success. Unfortunately, incarcerated juveniles, when released have been fully educated to be better criminals. Spending time with more experienced criminals provides an unwanted fertile environment for teaching adolescents exactly what we do not want them to learn.

In the last three decades there has been ample research to demonstrate that instituting multisystemic therapy for serious juvenile offenders, keeping them in the community with intensive intervention, can significantly reduce recidivism. When there is recidivism, it is less severe than in released incarcerated juveniles. Multisystemic therapy provides 24-hour available parental guidance, family therapy, individual therapy, group therapy, educational support, and quite importantly, a change of peer group. In New York City, there is the new mandate through the Juvenile Justice Initiative to implement interventions to keep juvenile offenders in the community rather than sending them to be incarcerated.

However, let's look at how teaching prosocial values in early childhood can reduce the incidence of first-time juvenile delinquency. Programs such as the Perry School Project will be discussed to demonstrate that although somewhat expensive, these innovative programs nonetheless are quite cost-effective as the cost to society of adjudication, incarceration, and victim damages are significantly greater. Along with teaching prosocial values, there has been renewed interest in early identification of youth at risk for developing Antisocial Personality Disorder. An update will be given on the status of both promising approaches in early intervention to prevent serious juvenile delinquency and hence adult criminality.

**Juvenile Delinquency, Prevention, Early Intervention**