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Gale Opposing Viewpoints

An online database that presents the pros and cons of social issues, as well as providing statistics and reliable Websites. Gale's Opposing Viewpoints covers such topics as immigration, terrorism, marijuana, right of privacy, capital punishment, etc.
Juvenile Justice System

At a school for students who have been expelled or experienced other trouble with regular school, some nontraditional methods for dealing with juvenile offenders include efforts by the founder of Good Sense Dogs, who exposes at-risk youth to animals to teach empathy and vocational skills.

Explore this topic
The juvenile justice system is stacked against poor families

I sentenced a teen to die in prison; I regret it

The Tough, Often Lonely Job of Teaching Incarcerated Students
Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system in the United States refers to the institutions that enforce laws applying to minors, determine the guilt of juveniles accused of crimes, impose punishments, and seek to rehabilitate young people involved in criminal activity. Juvenile courts also handle cases involving abused or neglected children. Until the country's first juvenile court was established in Chicago, Illinois, in 1899, minors over the age of seven entered the same criminal justice system as adults, with other jurisdictions introducing juvenile courts in subsequent years. The experiences of an accused juvenile can vary significantly depending on where and how they are prosecuted. Each state sets its own age of majority, which refers to the age at which a person is considered...
Juvenile Detention Can Be Effective

America’s Prisons, 2016. Lexile Measure: 1070L.

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Article Commentary


“The core function of juvenile detention in the 21st century has undergone sweeping changes ... that emphasize rehabilitative and therapeutic services in lieu of strict ‘punitive’ measures.”

In the following viewpoint, James Swift, with the help of several juvenile detention experts, argues that the juvenile detention system of the twenty-first century is capable of providing the support and rehabilitation that young offenders need. Relying on the testimony of people who work in juvenile correctional facilities, Swift makes the argument that, despite its obvious flaws, the current juvenile detention system can have a positive influence on troubled youths and not simply lead them further into a life of crime and continued incarceration.”

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The juvenile justice system is stacked against poor families

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Article Commentary

"Court systems are drowning poor families in financial burdens, and for what?"

Julienne James is a director of criminal justice at the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, a philanthropic organization devoted to social justice and reform. Susan Mangold is the chief executive officer of the Juvenile Law Center, a nonprofit firm advocating for child welfare and juvenile justice reforms. In the following viewpoint, James and Mangold decry the juvenile justice system for burdening defendants with legal fees for mandated, court-appointed lawyers, despite the fact that many of these youths come from families that are unable to afford the expense. Defendants risk incurring further penalties because nonpayment of legal fees can result in continued probation, even after adjudication. To avoid these fees, the authors contend, defendants from poor households are often forced to forego the use of lawyers or to plead guilty, which can yield profoundly negative consequences. James and Mangold further note that the collection of delinquent fees commonly costs state governments more money than they receive.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to James and Mangold, how do the economic backgrounds of juvenile defendants and their families affect treatment of these defendants in the juvenile justice system?
2. What does the anecdote offered by attorney Gar Blume, as cited by the authors, reveal about the personal, legal, and financial impacts of court fees on poor families?
3. In your opinion, should court-appointed attorneys for juvenile defendants be paid for the amount of time they spend on their cases?
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