Moving away from overly punitive policies, toward **healing-oriented** criminal and juvenile justice approaches.

Restorative justice, diversion/alternative incarceration programs, trauma-informed systems and prisoner rehabilitation & re-entry programs are among the most promising solutions...

**Statistical Spotlight**

With less than 5% of the world’s population, the United States has nearly 25% of its prisoners – 2.3 million – of its prisoners

After the Longmont Community Justice Partnership (in Longmont, Colorado) implemented its **Community Restorative Justice Program** recidivism rates dropped to less than 8% in its first three years.

**Overview**

Our criminal justice system in America is broken. Our so-called “tough on crime” laws have led to us being the most incarcerated nation in the developed world – disproportionately affecting minorities and some of our most already hard hit communities. Yet at the same time, we have some of the highest levels of violence and crime. It is clearly not an effective strategy, and in fact is largely destructive.

Pew research has shown that if you are locking up more than 500 people per 100,000, you are actually adding to crime because we are disrupting and destabilizing so many families and communities that cannot easily recover. The average in many parts of the US is over 700 per 100,000 and there are many communities around the country that are at 2000 or even 4000 per 100,000.

We must do better, and we can do better.

We are seeing a plethora of cost-effective and evidence-based approaches to implementing justice in society that focus more on healing harm done, rather than simply punishing it. These approaches are proving to work better than our current approach.
Empowering Strategies and Programs, Proven Efficacy:

**Early Intervention:** Engaging at risk youth early and providing them with support needed to be successful in life can build them into strong, productive members of their communities before they fall into cycles of violence, incarceration, and despair. This can be accomplished through mentoring programs, at home family support, after school programs, and many other positive interventions.

**Restorative Justice:** We seek approaches to justice that provide an effective process and container for the development of understanding between offenders and victims as well as the wider community. It provides the conditions, guided by victims, for the possibility of healing, forgiveness and restoration. The nature of a restorative process guided by victims’ needs allows for offenders to come to terms with the human cost of their actions and attempts to right the wrong together with all stakeholders. This often is freeing to victims, as well, and a key aspect of their own ability to move forward. In laying the foundations for empathy, restorative justice can and has radically changed lives, prevented crime and recidivism, and rebuilt communities. Working programs in the US have shown astounding success in reducing recidivism, saving time and judicial expense, while preventing incarceration and its associated costs.

**Prisoner rehabilitation and re-entry support:** When incarceration is necessary, it is critical that offenders are treated with essential human dignity and given the best chance possible to return to their communities as full members of society, with life skills, job skills and equal opportunities for employment. We support programs in prisons that provide life-skills, that teach inmates emotional literacy, how to better communicate, resolve conflict and deal with emotional and psychological issues. These support modalities have been shown to help transform lives.

**Trauma-Informed Justice and Courts:** An increasing body of evidence tells us that the majority of people in jails and prisons have experienced trauma that has scarred their minds and hearts. They may have survived rape, assault, or childhood sexual abuse, or they may have witnessed violence done to others. The experiences that trauma survivors have in the criminal justice system, far from leading them to positive changes in their lives, often add new trauma and deepen their wounds. Many will never be able to break out of the narrow trajectory that constrains their futures unless the justice system and their communities can help them to focus on the root problem: trauma, its lasting effects in human lives, and the need to begin the healing process.

**Diversionary Approaches:** Pre-trial and pre-charge diversion support approaches allow low risk offenders to move into programs that address their behavior without saddling them with a conviction, having life-long ramifications, or sending them to a prison where they are often driven further into a harmful lifestyle.

**Juvenile Justice:** The Juvenile Justice system must take into account the differences in brain development between youth and adults, and treat youth differently. The juvenile justice system needs to provide support in the community whenever possible, reserving incarceration, which is far more harmful to youth than adults, for only the most extreme cases if at all.

**Mediation:** Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution, a way of resolving disputes between two or more parties with concrete effects. Typically, a third party, the mediator, assists the parties to negotiate a settlement. Mediators use various techniques to open, or improve, dialogue and empathy between disputants, helping the parties reach an agreement.

Learn more: www.peacealliance.org/justice

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