

Empowering Strategies and Programs

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. (See Community Peacebuilding and Teaching Peace in Schools Cornerstones).

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.

Prisons must also be places that provide support and education to prisoners so they are able to care for themselves through productive employment upon release. Returning citizens must have access to supportive programming upon release to ease their transition and to prevent recidivism.

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 constricts 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.

Creating a trauma-informed environment within the juvenile justice system is especially important considering research has demonstrated that many of the youths involved in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to traumatic events.

Diversions 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.

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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.

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