

PROMOTING YOUTH RIGHTS, FREEDOM, AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

A SAHM POSITION PAPER ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEMS

EVA MOORE, MD
DIVISION OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH & MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
VANCOUVER, BC

ON BEHALF OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEMS POSITION PAPER WORKING GROUP



DISCLOSURES

- I have no financial relationships or interests to disclose



CO-AUTHORS

Laura K. Grubb MD MPH
Tufts Medical Center
Boston, MA 02111

Calae D. Philippe MBBS, MPH
Ministry of Health
Nassau, N.P., The Bahamas

Kimberly J. West MD, MPH
Los Angeles County Department of
Public Health
Los Angeles, CA 90005

Amy T. Campbell, JD, MBE
University of Memphis
Memphis, TN

Consultants:
Mychelle Farmer
Mañuel Ángel Oscos-Sanchez
Ann Sattler



OBJECTIVES

- Recognize youth incarceration as an international public health concern
- Uphold international agreements on freedom and rights of young persons
- Identify aspects of youth justice systems that can impinge on health adolescent growth and development

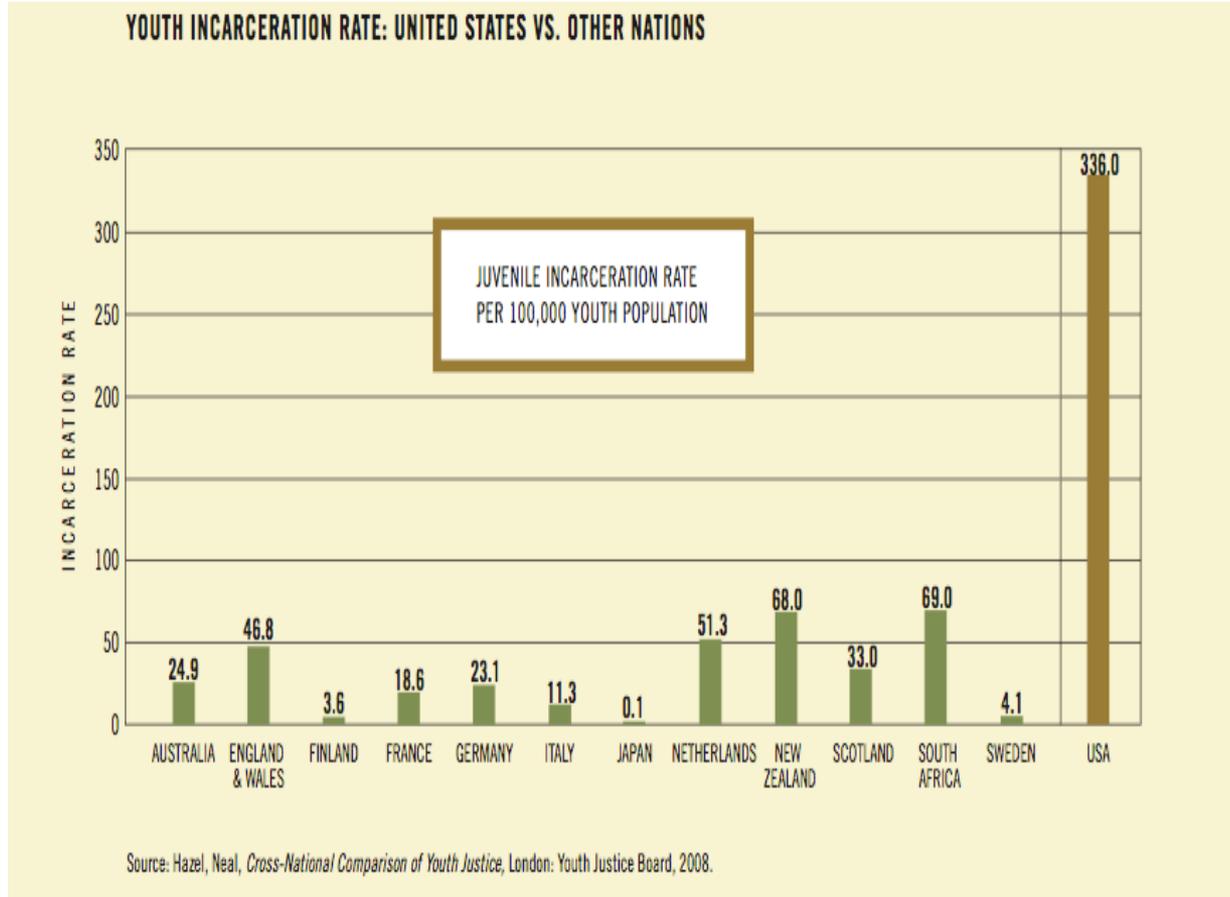


YOUTH VOICE

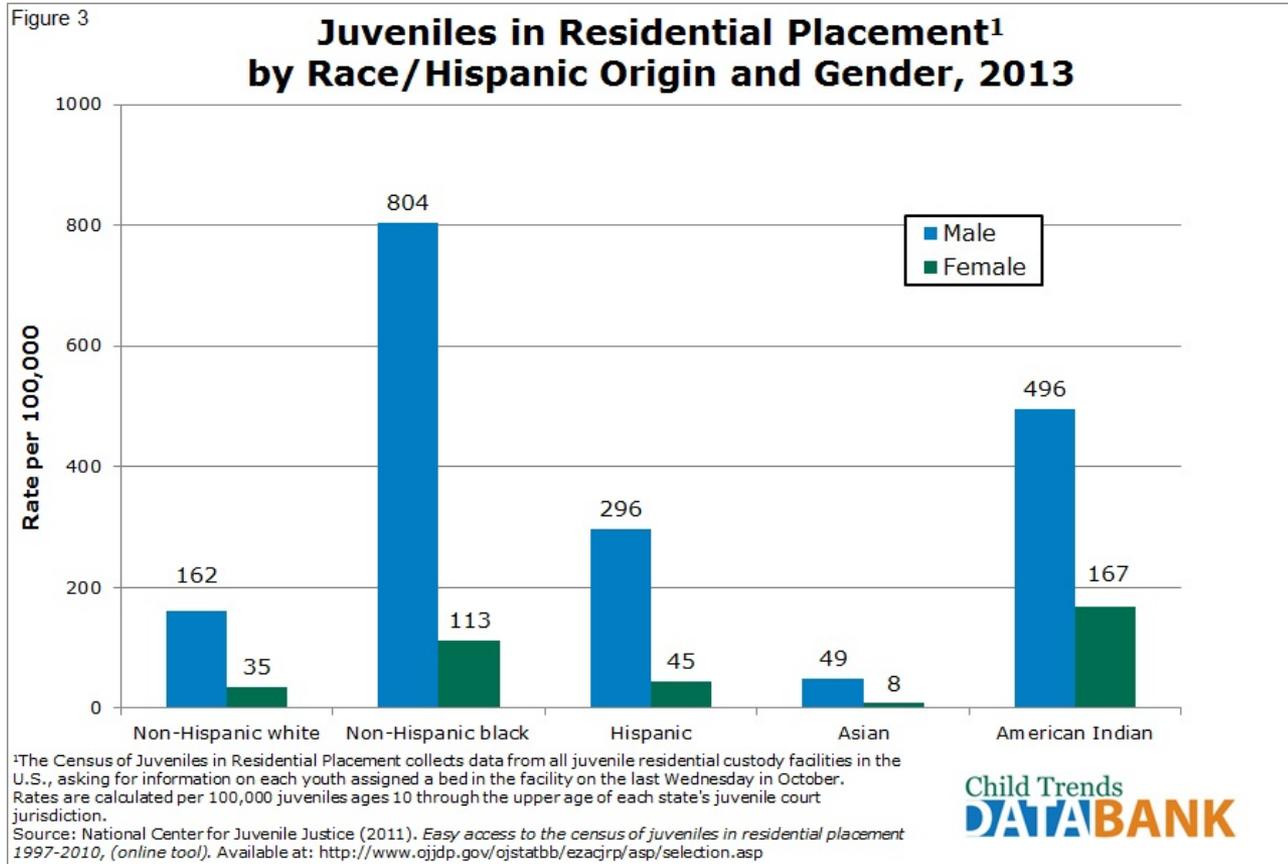
...I was like 14 at the time 13 at the time and I'd be chillin' with 21 year olds, 22 year olds, 23 year olds. I think my oldest buddy was like 35, man, this huge guy, all inked up, like he got stabbed like 8 times and 2 bullet holes in him. Crazy good friend of mine. He's dead now, may he rest in peace. But, he showed me this whole life, as well as a lot of people around me. Like, at that time, my vision was so blurred, with all the money, the sex and the drugs and everything, that I was like, man, I gotta get into this, and I started doing worse things, and hanging out with worse people started not caring about my family as much as my friends, started not caring about my life and I let this non-conscious take over me.



YOUTH INCARCERATION RATES INTERNATIONALLY

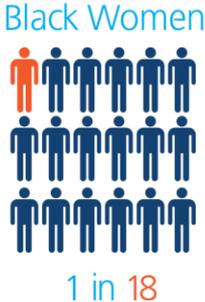
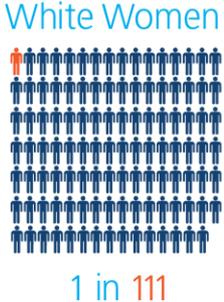
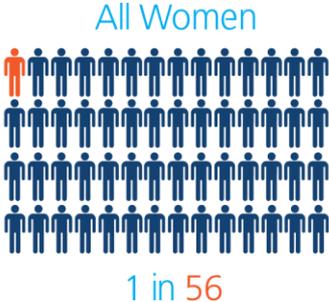
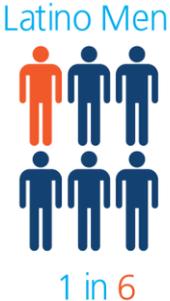
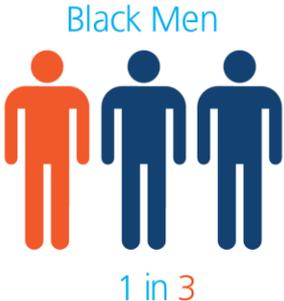
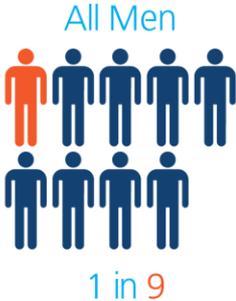


GENDER & RACE VARIATIONS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE



SIGNIFICANT DISPARITIES

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment



Source: Bonczar, T. (2003). *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics

DEFINITIONS

- Incarceration
- Youth



HEALTHY GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL YOUTH

- Paradigm shift in thinking about our role in youth incarceration
- Uphold the UN Rights of the Child
- Shift the focus away from detention of youth → build structures and supports
- Promote opportunities for growth and enrichment
- Avoid incarceration of young people except in rare circumstances



PRINCIPLE RESEARCH



- Risk taking behaviors are normative¹
- Thriving for youth requires exposure and practice in normative environments²
- Most youth justice policies are not scientifically based³
- Most first time offenders do not re-offend⁴
- Vast majority age out of crime by adulthood⁵
- Incarceration is generally ineffective and counter-productive to reducing youth crime⁶
- Community-based programs are more effective in changing youth behaviors⁶



POSITIONS PAPERS ON YOUTH INCARCERATION

- Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
 - Health care for incarcerated youth
 - Executing juvenile offenders
 - Recommendations for promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adolescents
- American Academy of Pediatrics
 - Health care for youth in the juvenile justice system
- Canadian Pediatric Society
 - Youth justice and health
 - Health care standards for youth in custodial facilities
- American Public Health Association
 - Encourage healthy behavior by adolescents
- No position statements found for International Association for Adolescent Health, American Association of Family Physicians
- Non-health associations provided the bulk of policy statements



POSITIONS

1. Minimize incarceration and promote alternatives
2. Use scientifically based policies, programs and practices
3. Promote ongoing research and evaluation
4. Promote privacy and dignity of young people
5. Promote positive media and public portrayals of youth



ONE

Incarceration be a last option for select offenders who have committed serious violent crimes and are unable to remain safely in the community.



In the event of incarceration, a multi-disciplinary team of educators, health professionals, social welfare, and other youth supportive disciplines will participate to assure young people are safe, housed appropriately with minimal interference in their healthy development, and receive consistent and appropriate medical and mental health services.

ONE: RECOMMENDATIONS

- Avoid incarceration whenever possible
- Incorporation diversion at all stages
- Minimum age of 12 years¹
- Consider extending upper age to account for emerging understanding of brain development and plasticity
- Promote a safe, age-appropriate, healthy and enriched environment
- Multidisciplinary, interagency teams; never for-profit
- Abolish the death penalty for crimes committed while under 18



¹UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2007;

TWO

Policies, programs, and practices affecting youth and involving youth justice, at-risk youth, and crime prevention will be based on science, available evidence, and ongoing evaluation.



THREE

Promote research and ongoing program evaluation of policies, programs, and practices affecting youth and involving youth justice, at-risk youth, and crime prevention.



FOUR

Protect the privacy and dignity of vulnerable minors.



FIVE

Encourage positive public and media portrayals of youth in healthy relationships within their communities and reduced representations of youth that are negative, violent, deviant and threatening.



YOUTH VOICE



And so I just, I began to hate myself for it. Started doing drugs, cocaine. Ended up in hospital trying to kill myself. And I go, I look back on it and I go, who's been here for me, the whole time, holding my hand while I've been doing all these drugs and stuff like that? Has my buddies, down on the block, cruising around in cars, selling drugs, robbing people. Buddies that you know, I've gotten stabbed, next to another guy who just got stabbed. I've been in rumbles with these guys. 10 people versus 10 people. You know, gone head to head with 21 year olds when we were 15. Where are these guys now? They know that I tried to kill myself. They know that I'm in the hospital. I don't see them. I see my mom. I see my dad. They're here for me.



THANK YOU



Eva Moore, MD
Division of Adolescent Health & Medicine
Vancouver, BC, Canada
Eva.moore@cw.bc.ca

Laura K. Grubb MD MPH
Tufts Medical Center
Boston, MA 02111

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Youth voice

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