

POLICE AND ABUSE

When discussing police efforts and juvenile delinquency one can only imagine the difficulty officers encounter while performing their primary duty which is to protect the public. But how can or does one (officer) efficiently protect the community while preserving the rights of the juvenile criminals as well. We as a public have become more and more aware everyday of how hard it is for the police to work effectively, but now we are faced with a larger dilemma. The juvenile justice system was enacted to help juveniles who commit crimes learn from their mistakes or actions and to make them better citizens for our communities. The dilemma we face is having a criminal justice system that wants criminals to pay for their actions and a juvenile justice system that wants to help those who commit crimes. And who do we have in the middle of these two remarkable systems? The police.

The concept of proper policing has changed over the years and has incorporated the assistance of concerned citizens. We are leaving the crime fighting to the communities for policing. No we're not deputizing communities, but we are involving those concerned citizens who see the downfall of not being involved anymore. We are no longer crime fighters, but we maintain order and discipline. We are not necessarily here just to stop an armed bank robbery in progress, but we are more visible in the community whereas this acts as a deterrent to commit most crimes in communities. And we let the members of the community know we are accessible at all times to be the deterrent or visible whenever they should need us

Since officers cannot treat juveniles in the same manner as adults the idea of community policing is the greatest tool conceived. Imagine a community who is involved in every child's life that when this particular child misbehaves in any way members of the community are the first responders and handle this situation without police involvement. Dream on I know, but when we are discussing juveniles and police officers I often believe we are too late in rehabilitating a child. Let's look at a simple statistic of juvenile arrests in our nation:

1. 500 juveniles are arrested.
2. Of them 320 are referred to juvenile court.
3. 140 are informally handled and released.
4. 25 referred to criminal court.
5. 10 are referred to welfare.
6. 5 are referred to other police department agencies.

Where is the community involvement? There were 180 that were either dropped or recorded for record. If communities were more involved we would see a substantial decline in these numbers almost over night. Yes, we have violent juvenile offenders within our communities, but they are a small minority of the juvenile offender population. You see, when there is a juvenile offender officers have to deal with (most likely) an agitated offender who rebels against any form of discipline or authority as well as agitated witnesses and or parents of the offender. In rare situations an officer cannot maintain their professionalism when dealing with juveniles and or agitated witnesses and escalated the situation, but if the community was doing their part perhaps the police wouldn't have had to be notified of the situation at all. Community Policing comes first.