

Research Overview on Positive Youth Development

Studies consistently confirm that incarcerating young people causes great harm, including increased victimization, recidivism, school drop-out, and long-term physical and mental health issues. Fortunately, research also identifies what young people need for positive, healthy development. Alternatives to incarceration, such as release schedules, should be crafted to ensure each young person has time for and access to activities, environments, and people that will help them grow to become thriving adults.

SCHOOL	<p>E. Jason Baron et al., <u>Pretrial Juvenile Detention</u>, The Cato Institute (2023).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pretrial detention reduces the probability of a young person graduating high school by almost 40 percent. <p>Richard Mendel, The Sentencing Project, <u>Why Youth Incarceration Fails: An Updated Review of the Evidence</u> (2023).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detention decreases the likelihood of a young person enrolling and completing college and lowers employment and earning opportunities in adulthood.
FRESH AIR / FREE TIME	<p>Harrison Pinckney et al., <u>Black PlayCrit: Examining the Disruption of Play for Black Male Youth</u>, 13 Am. J. of Play 210 (2021).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depriving youth, particularly Black youth, of their freedom to engage in play, which is vital for healthy development, is rooted in historically oppressive social constructs that have deprived Black children of their childhood and the freedom to play. <p>Linda L. Caldwell & Peter A. Witt, <u>Leisure, Recreation, and Play from a Developmental Context</u>, <u>New Directions for Youth Dev.</u> 130 (2011).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people need to have opportunities to find activities that are inherently interesting and intrinsically motivated, which should include time for unstructured activities, to promote healthy development. <p>Linda L. Caldwell, <u>Preliminary Effects of a Leisure Education Program to Promote Healthy Use of Free Time among Middle School Adolescents</u>, 36 J. Leisure Rsch. 311 (2004).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role and identity experimentation, which typically occur within the context of free time, play a vital role in fostering healthy development. Encouraging youth to take charge of their leisure time by engaging in activities that enhance their overall wellbeing promotes positive behaviors and reduces negative behaviors. <p>Susan Strife & Liam Downey, <u>Childhood Development and Access to Nature: A New Direction for Environmental Inequality Research</u>, 22 Organ Environ. 100 (2009).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's exposure to nature positively impacts their overall development by improving cognitive functioning and social skills while reducing stress, among other factors. Conversely, when children have limited exposure to nature, they are more likely to endure negative and long-term developmental consequences. Children gain a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and physical advantages from having access to nature and green spaces. These benefits include enhanced concentration, improved academic performance, reduced stress and aggression levels, and a decreased likelihood of obesity.
COUNSELING	<p>The Annie E. Casey Found., <u>Transforming Juvenile Probation A Vision for Getting It Right</u> 10 (2018).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives aimed at enhancing psychosocial development in young people through positive youth development opportunities and counseling, specifically utilizing cognitive behavioral approaches, have a tendency to lower recidivism rates.

SPORTS / EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY

National Research Council, National Academies Press, Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach (2013).

- A young person's involvement in a positive peer group can promote healthy development. Structured activities, such as sports and afterschool clubs, can contribute to improved reasoning skills in youth.

Jacquelynne S. Eccles & Bonnie L. Barber, Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?, 14 J. Adolescent Rsch. 10 (1999).

- Youth involvement in church and volunteer activities, team sports, school activities, performing arts, and academic clubs are all linked to positive youth development.
- Youth engagement in extracurricular activities is linked with markers of positive youth development, such as improved self-perception, higher grades, stronger school engagement, and development of educational goals.
- Youth involvement in sports is associated with a lower likelihood of dropping out of school and a higher rate of attending college.

Joseph L. Mahoney & Robert B. Cairns, Do Extracurricular Activities Protect Against Early School Dropout?, 33 Dev. Psych. 241 (1997).

- Student engagement in extracurricular activities is related to lower rates of early school dropout.

U.S. Dep't of Health & Hum. Serv., Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: 2nd Edition (2018).

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that youth engage in at least 60 minutes or more of "moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily" daily to promote healthy development and growth.

Shannon L. Michael et al., Critical Connections: Health and Academics, 85 J. Sch. Health 740 (2015).

- Children who are physically active have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance, and overall physical health.

Anouk Spruit et al., Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Review, 45 J Youth Adolescence 656 (2015).

- A young person's involvement in sports gives them an opportunity to form positive prosocial relationships with peers and adult mentors while practicing social regulation, which is critical for youth development. Further, a young person's commitment to sports may contribute to a young person avoiding risky behavior that would jeopardize their ability to continually participate in sports.

FAMILY, COMMUNITY, SPIRITUAL, OR OTHER MENTORSHIP ACTIVITY

National Research Council, National Academies Press, Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach (2013).

- Having a parent/parent figure or an involved adult who is invested in a young person's growth is critical to healthy psychological development. Carving out time for family bonding and/or opportunities for young people to develop meaningful relationships with other adults in their lives may serve as a protective factor against external risks and reduce risky behavior over time.

David L. DuBois et al., How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence, 12 Psych. Sci. in the Pub. Int. 57 (2011).

- Youth participation in mentoring programs has been shown to have a positive impact on behavioral, social, emotional, and academic areas of a young person's life.