Support Development or Abuse?

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Juveniles should never be tried as adults because they are not adults. Juveniles are still developing and learning who they are. Prison has many negative influences which not only harms juveniles but teaches them how to be criminals. There are many different types of programs out there for juveniles who have been very successful which should be implemented instead of prison for juveniles.

According to Eight Stages of Development by Erik Erikson (1950), the fourth stage of development is from the ages of 6 to 12 and is the industry versus inferiority stage. At this stage children begin to learn personal responsibility, to follow rules, and that there are consequences for their actions. The fifth stage of development is from the ages of 13 to 19 and is the identity versus role confusion stage. At this stage the juvenile is developing their own identity. These stages show that a juvenile is not an adult and is still learning and developing. Both of these stages are very critical times in these juveniles' lives.

If a developing juvenile is sent to prison there is a great risk that they will be physically, sexually and mentally abused. This type of abuse is not what these teens need. Why would we want to send someone who is still learning and developing themselves somewhere where all they will learn is abuse?

There are many types of programs out there for juveniles who have committed criminal offenses which have proven to be very successful. Missouri has developed a great juvenile program called The Division of Youth Services. This program focuses on rehabilitating troubled juveniles who have been into trouble. There are group homes throughout the state for girls and
Support Development or Abuse

others for boys which are monitored 24/7, and teach core values, education, and communication skills.

Knowing that we can either send our juveniles away to be further abused at prison or send them to a program to better develop themselves and learn important values, why would we ever send them to prison? "Someday, maybe, there will exist a well-informed, well considered and yet fervent public conviction that the most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of a child’s spirit; for such mutilation undercuts the life principle of trust, without which every human act, may it feel ever so good and seem ever so right is prone to perversion by destructive forms of conscientiousness." (Erikson E., 1950) Missouri has stepped up and proven that other programs work, let’s try them.
References


