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The Impact of Juvenile Curfew Laws in California

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CONTACT: Daniel Macallair

E-mail: dmacallair@cjcj.org

Tel: (415) 621-5661 x310

(San Francisco) The first comprehensive academic study of youth curfews could find no evidence that such curfews reduce the rate of juvenile crime. This held true for any race of youth, for any region, and for any type of crime. "Curfews are just another dead end," says Dan Macallair, one of the study's authors. "Its time to look at prevention strategies that support our kids rather than criminalize them."

Funded by the California Wellness Foundation and conducted by the Justice Policy Institute, the study compared curfew arrest rates and youth crime rates from 1978 through 1996 for the entire State of California.

- For the entire state of California there was no category of crime (misdemeanors, violent crime, property crime, etc.) which significantly declined in association with youth curfews.
- Overall, counties with strict youth curfews witnessed no decrease in youth crime relative to counties without strict curfews.
- Four large counties (Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Fresno, and Ventura) displayed a racial bias in curfew enforcement. Authorities arrested Latino and African-American youth for curfew violations at rates several times higher than that of white youth.
- When studying just African-American or Latino youth, the study found that youth curfews had no significant effect on crime. However, the study did find that, for White and Asian youth, curfews were associated with an increase in crime, particularly misdemeanors.

The study also compared youth crime rates and curfew arrest rates for each of the 12 most populous counties in California and all twenty-one cities with populations over 100,000 in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Currently the U.S. Senate is considering legislation, S. 10, which would house youth curfew violators with adult prisoners. 142,433 juveniles were arrested for curfew violations in 1996 according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. This is a 116% increase since just 1994.

The study, entitled "The Impact of Juvenile Curfew Laws in California," is co-authored by Mike Males and

Dan Macallair. Mr. Males is a doctoral candidate in the School of Social Ecology at UC Irvine. Mr. Macallair is associate director of the Justice Policy Institute. The study is forthcoming in the September, 1998 edition of the *Western Criminology Review*, a peer-reviewed academic journal. All crime data used in the study came directly from the California Department of Justice.

This study was made possible through funding from the California Wellness , Haigh Scatena, Heller, Vanguard, and Van Loben Sels Foundations.

A copy of the Institute's report is available either by calling the Justice Policy Institute at (415) 621-5661 or (202) 678-9282, or off of the Institute's web site at www.cjcj.org. The Justice Policy Institute is a policy development and research body which promotes effective and sensible approaches to America's justice system.

Read what cops in California are talking about!!!

Police give rave reviews of JPI's study on curfews

"The first threshold isn't an officer saying, "It's 10 o'clock, get inside. The first threshold are the parents who give a little bit of lecture, a little bit of theory, and a little bit of strap." Jim Pasco, executive director of the Fraternal Order of Police, *The USA Today*, June 10, 1998

"This is the same group that says 'three strikes' doesn't work." Matt Ross, a spokesman for California Attorney General Dan Lungren, *The San Francisco Examiner*, June 10, 1998

"Their findings defy logic." Larry Brown, Executive Director of the California District Attorney's Association, *The Orange County Register*, June 10th, 1998

"[It's] a biased attempt to con people into believing their philosophy." Monrovia Police Chief Joseph Santoro, *United Press International*, June 10, 1998

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