

I have worked with kids in the juvenile justice field for almost fifteen years, in various positions I have held. I understand that Juvenile Parole Officers are one of the cuts that are being suggested. I am not sure what those making the decisions background is, however I would like to take a minute to talk about what a difference I have seen Parole Officers make in the life of adolescents, particularly the girls unit. By the time parent's children are before the court they are exhausted and do not know where to turn. The parole officers are extensively trained in trauma and other issues that effect the adolescents they are working with lives. They not only help to put appropriate services in place, they manage the case, support the parents and are an outside influence that hold the adolescents accountable, and therefore often influence their decisions. Decisions, that in the past, lead to problems in their own lives, their family lives and the community as a whole. Equally important is the fact that the adolescents feel as if they can tell their peers that they cannot (fill in the blank) because their parole officer will hold them accountable. The other kids don't argue with that and before the kid is off parole their peers no longer expect them to be making poor decisions, and equally as often they have acquired a new peer group.

10 years ago I worked with a young woman in residential who had been extremely traumatized in multiple ways. She was a mess. Six different colors in her hair, so many piercings you couldn't see her face, quick to punch, run and use drugs. Her Parole officer understood the underlying issues and was able to guide her to be part of the team making her life better. After her parole was up, she asked to sign on to continue with the voluntary piece of Parole. Today that young woman is an RN, mother and wife. She beams happiness. She does not use any kind of substances and is a remarkable mother. Although I believe the clinical work was good, clinical work in and of itself is not enough, it was that in the home, long term support by someone that new her.

How much money do you think the state of CT saved on providing a parole officer as a youth for 18 months vs adult probation, incarceration, mandated treatment, welfare etc? I am guessing it was much more cost effective to provide the juvenile parole officer.

Although I could give you 100 more stories like this, the result is the same. Juvenile Parole Officers make a difference. Not only do they help change the lives of children/adolescents; help put families back together and save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars in the long run, they help break the cycle so that the next generation has a chance.

I would ask that you reconsider this and possibly make your cuts where the state can handle it and it will not have such a negative impact on this generation of children, but future ones as well.

Respectfully,

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