

JUVENILE JUSTICE GROUP WORK

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Allow students to explore the issues that should be considered or disregarded in sentencing.
- Specifically explore the issues that affect juveniles and the Justice System and how they may differ from adults.
- Explore the purposes of sentencing and the tension between accountability, retribution, and rehabilitation.
- Create a dialogue through the context of a personalized story concerning the above issues and allow discussion of opposing views.
- Instill a sense of appreciation for different parties to a crime and their competing interests i.e., criminal, victim, families of both parties, society, police, government, etc.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Background: Lecture on the overall juvenile justice system, emphasizing its unique purpose and differences from the adult justice system.
- Describe the situation concerning Eugene summarized on the next page. (You may not want to hand it out in order to prevent students from seeing questions #2 through #4.)
- Divide class into equal discussion groups or divide into groups representing different parties to the crime i.e., criminal, victim, families of both parties, judge, mayor, etc.
- Ask students for the most important pieces of information they are missing in order to sentence Eugene.
- Record these responses by group in order to facilitate a debriefing of exercise later.
- After allowing all groups to participate in the additional questions and answers, ask them to return to their groups and respond to #2 through #4.

ISSUES FOR DEBRIEFING:

- What **satisfaction or dissatisfaction** would each of the parties to the crime feel given the assigned sentencing?
- Do students recognize the tension between **punishment and rehabilitation**?
- What about **deterrence**? Look at the big picture. Once all potential criminals understand how you sentence this crime, will they be sufficiently deterred from committing it?
- What factors influenced your decision most? How did they affect your view of Eugene's **accountability**?
- Discuss **variance in sentencing**: Do you think that we can expect similar variance in the juvenile justice system — are you OK with that.

JUVENILE JUSTICE EXERCISE

Eugene, 25 years old, hijacked a car on State Street at gunpoint. Unknown to Eugene until he forced the mother out and drove away, the car had a baby in the backseat. Eugene immediately pulled over on a side street and ran away leaving the car running and doors locked. Since it was an abnormally warm (95 degrees) late September day, the baby suffered extreme heat exhaustion/dehydration causing some long-term brain damage before the car was located.

Before realizing that there was a baby in the backseat, Eugene called an adult friend on a stolen cell phone and records show he told the friend, "What a rush man! I did it!" Then a baby is heard crying and Eugene's next words were, "Oh, @#&%!", before terminating the call. Eugene has since written a lengthy apology letter to the mother and her family stating that he regrets the incident. Eugene apparently purchased the cell phone from the adult friend the day before the car hijacking.

Eugene's only prior juvenile record includes one drug charge for marijuana possession, and he has been truant from school for approximately a month. Eugene was an above average student and well-liked by fellow students and teachers before this school year. You must decide first, whether Eugene should be tried in juvenile or adult court. And secondly, what should be the consequences, rehabilitation plan, and/or punishment for Eugene.

1. Come up with two questions you would like further information about concerning Eugene's situation before deciding his fate.

Distribute questions 2-4 after #1 has been addressed.

2. Should Eugene be tried in juvenile or adult court?
3. Define in detail the consequences, rehabilitation plan, and/or punishment for Eugene.
4. Give the top three considerations for your result. (For example: limited prior record, seriousness of crime, consequences of the crime to the baby, age, potential of Eugene, deterrent effect. etc.)