



## Legal/Justice System

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According to U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Strategy, an effective juvenile justice system must meet three objectives:

- Hold the juvenile offender accountable;
- Enable the juvenile to become a capable, productive, and responsive citizen; and
- Ensure the safety of the community.

In North America, the recidivism rate for young people leaving custody has been reported to be as high as 96 percent.<sup>1</sup> When restorative practices are a part of the common experience of a society, it can relieve the stress on the judicial and law enforcement systems.

Considerably fewer and less serious additional crimes are committed by juvenile offenders in several victim offender mediation programs in the U.S., when compared to similar offenders who did not participate in mediation.<sup>2</sup>

Behavioral Health professionals need take an integrated approach to working with those convicted of crimes. Many offenders also struggle with mental illness and substance abuse, making partnerships among behavioral health providers and the legal community essential.

1. Lewis DO, Yeager CA, Lovely R, Stein A & Cobham-Porterreal CS 1994. A clinical follow-up of delinquent males: ignored variables, unmet needs and the perpetuation of violence. *Journal of the American academy of child and adolescent psychiatry* vol 33: 518-28.

2. Participation in Victim-Offender Mediation and Reoffense: Successful Replications?  
Nugent et al. *Research on Social Work Practice*.2001; 11: 5-23