The Juvenile Justice System Of Ireland

In 2001, the juvenile justice system of Ireland passed the Children Act in hopes to have a more humane approach to controlling and disciplining children, as well as altering the legislation (Sargent, 2014). Seymour (2017) found that Ireland focuses on rehabilitation and prevention of crime by using reformatory schools, and usually incorporates religion. Ireland uses the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme (GJDP) to divert juvenile individuals who show anti-social behavior and who are involved in criminal activities (Seymour, 2017).

Hamric-Weis (1995) pointed out that one main issue that the Ireland government has is the misplacing of juveniles in the system, although Ireland is taking many precautions to rehabilitate in order for the youths to re-enter the community. According to the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), Ireland has reformation schools and several campuses to help troubled youths who have home issues, and need accommodations to help reconstruct these adolescents.

In contrast, Ireland is known to have a lot less criminal activity than United States, adults are sent to prison, while youths are directed to detention (Hamric-Weis, 1995). Juveniles are sent to detention as a last resort, and typically given the lightest sentence possible (Kilkelly, 2017). The main objective is to provide proper care and education during sentences to further prevent the child from attending detention again (Kilkelly, 2017).

Just like United States, Ireland has lots of prevention for at-risk youths in the juvenile justice system, over 100 different ways to be exact, including (Seymour, 2017). The Irish Youth Justice Service uses the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme to use positive interventions to challenge and change patterned behaviors to divert reoffending. A child must take responsibility for their actions, and must agree to what a juvenile liaison officer assumes is the right choice of pathway for the youth (Citizens Information, n. d.).

Family conferences are very important to the youth justice system, it typically occurs when a juvenile between age 12-18 commits an offence. In a family conference, the victim (if one), offender, and family of the offender join together with a health advisor, or probation officer to discuss the juveniles actions and the effect it has had on the victim, the community, and the family of the offender. They discuss a further plan to help divert the individual from committing another offence in the future, and avoiding completely entering the criminal world. Community projects are also another way to make sure students stay out of trouble. Generally in a community project, juveniles will visit classrooms, take field trips, and interact with other youths and juvenile liaison officers. (Citizens Information, n. d.).

The Irish Youth Justice System created a Youth Justice Action Plan in 2013. This plan was created purely for proof of the accuracy of the programs and diversions used by Ireland. It allows children to voice their opinions and concerns about the system. It focuses on how the youth system can be better and more effective for juveniles. It also enhances inner-agencies to use this information in a positive manner, meanwhile protecting the children’s rights and best interest (Judge, 2014).

Throughout the many different ways Ireland deals with the juvenile justice system, they have

similarities and differences to United States. The system has many different prevention and programs for youths, with hopes to transform the life of these minors through family conferences, reformation schools, detention, and community projects and events. Ireland seems to have a lower rate of youth crime than the United States through my research, maybe United States should rethink the way we go about rehabilitation for adolescents to make sure they do not get involved in criminality in the future.