

# Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System



## MYTH vs. FACT

### Juvenile Curfew Laws

#### MYTH

Curfew laws are an effective method for reducing delinquent behavior and victimization. Youth in general are deterred from committing delinquent acts when curfew laws are in place.



#### FACT

Most studies find that juvenile curfew laws are ineffective at reducing crime and victimization.



Juvenile curfew laws are thought to reduce delinquency and victimization by restricting the times during which youth can occupy public places or streets. Despite their commonsense appeal, research has not found evidence that curfews effectively reduce delinquency or victimization.

Systematic Reviews of the Empirical Research:

- Adams (2003) reviewed ten studies of juvenile curfew laws and concluded that “the scientific evidence failed to support the argument that curfews reduce crime and criminal victimization.”
- More recently, Wilson and colleagues (2016) concluded that “the average effect on juvenile crime during curfew hours was slightly positive – that is a slight increase in crime – and close to zero for crime during all hours. Both effects were not significant. Similarly, juvenile victimization also appeared unaffected by the imposition of a curfew ordinance.”

Overall, researchers suggest that the primary reason that curfew laws appear to be ineffective may be their generality (i.e., they are applied to all young people despite the fact that most young people are law-abiding). One study directly assessed this line of reasoning and found that in most cases in which young people were cited for curfew violations, there was no indication that the youth had committed or was about to commit any delinquent act beyond the violation of the curfew itself (Sapp & Blasi, 2012). Additionally, national estimates suggest that most delinquent behaviors occur in the afternoon or early evening, times which are often not targeted by juvenile curfew laws (Puzzanchera et al., 2022).

#### References:

1. Adams, K. (2003). The effectiveness of juvenile curfews at crime prevention. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 587, 136-159.
2. Puzzanchera, C., Hockenberry, S., & Sickmund, M. (2022). *Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: 2022 National Report*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.
3. Sapp, D. & Blasi, J. (2012). *Counterproductive and Wasteful: Los Angeles' Daytime Curfew Pushes Students Away from School and Diverts Resources Away from Real Community Safety*. ACLU of Southern California Public Counsel Community Rights Campaign.
4. Wilson, D., Gill, C., Olaghere, A., & McClure, D. (2016). Juvenile curfew effects on criminal behavior and victimization: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 12(1), 1-97.