



## Through Our Eyes: Children, Violence, and Trauma Videos and Resources

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### Innovations in Juvenile Justice Transcript

**GIRL:** My mom met a guy, and it was just awful. He would lock us in the basement. He would burn my private areas with cigarettes. At age twelve, I was addicted to heroin.

**BOY:** There's always violence on the streets—fighting, people getting shot, everything.

**BOY:** My brothers, they grew up selling dope and stuff like that. When I turned 12, my big brother got shot in the head, and he didn't make it.

**GIRL:** I let my anger build up and I started going down a path of destruction.

**TIM DECKER, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES, MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:** We often think about the youth in the juvenile justice system and the risk that they pose to others. We don't often think about the trauma that's happened to them.

**HON. STEVEN C. TESKE, CHIEF JUDGE, JUVENILE COURT, CLAYTON COUNTY, GA:** Everything that we do here at the Juvenile Court of Clayton County seeks to redirect and rehabilitate young people who've gotten into trouble.

**VICTORIA HARRIS, JUVENILE COURT OFFICER, CLAYTON COUNTY, GA:** A lot of the children that do come to the attention of the court, there is some sort of trauma in their background. A lot of times it's hidden.

**STEVEN TESKE:** When we do risk and needs assessments to determine why kids get into trouble, we need to start asking, "Is it because he or she has experienced trauma in their childhood?"

**MAN:** Would everyone please just look through your package, and you can actually see a case that we're going to be staffing.

**STEVEN TESKE:** The Clayton County Collaborative Child Study Team is a bridge between the school system in the community.

**VICTORIA HARRIS:** We don't just look at what the offense was, but everything else—family dynamics, things that are going on in the neighborhood, things that are going on in the school.

**WOMAN:** He's getting in trouble for not following directions, cutting class, doesn't really have a lot of respect for authority figures.

**STEVEN TESKE:** It's a multidisciplinary panel. They meet on a regular basis, and they assess the kid and the family.

**WOMAN:** This family has some trauma in their lives. His uncle was murdered in the home.

**MAN:** Did you all provide any counseling or therapeutic interventions to help the family out?

**SHANNON J. HOWARD, MSW, JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE COORDINATOR, CLAYTON COUNTY, GA:** We all sit down at the table with the service providers, the school counselor and social worker, as well as with the parent, and come up with that plan to modify the child's behavior, to keep them from going into the juvenile system. The ultimate goal for the program is to redirect our youth and strengthen family. We will be developing a community intervention treatment plan for him.

**STEVEN TESKE:** One of the greatest first steps in rehabilitation is helping a child, a young person, understand the concept of empathy, to put a face on the person they hurt. For some youth, if they've experienced trauma, there's a part of them that has shut down. Alternative Dispute Resolution plays a very, very significant role in increasing the competency of the juvenile.

**SHELIA KEY, MS, PP, MEDIATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR, CLAYTON COUNTY, GA:** Mediation allows the respondent, along with the victim, an opportunity to resolve their differences with one another, versus actually going through a formal process involving the judge.

**MEDIATOR:** If we do come up with an agreement, and all of the terms are met, then the case will be dismissed.

**STEVEN TESKE:** It is extremely important that the victim has a say in this process.

**FEMALE VICTIM:** I want her to face some kind of consequences.

**SHELIA KEY:** Once they have a chance to actually talk with the child and really find out what's really going on, a lot of the times the victims will even decide that they want things to be put in place whereby the child can go on to be a productive citizen.

**MEDIATOR:** Do you think an apology might be an appropriate first step?

**SHELIA KEY:** This child hopefully would not have any other court involvement or have any problems at school or in the community.

**VICTORIA HARRIS:** Anything that I can do to avoid putting a child in detention, I'll do it. If we keep locking this child up, they're with other offenders. They're learning new tricks and trades. They come out, and they're gang members now. All we're doing is creating a situation to lock them up as an adult.

**STEVEN TESKE:** All right, let's go over some of the reports. We now have the Second Chance Court program that focuses on designated felony kids. These are high-risk kids. You commit a crime, you do wrong, you violate the conditions—that's the only time you need to be scared of me. It's an alternative to detention. They're on house confinement. They go to school. They can't leave the house unless they're with a parent. They meet with me and we get reports from all the kids, and the parents are there. And it's an informal setting. They receive life-skills training, therapy depending upon their needs, and then they do community service. [The most important change you have to demonstrate is your attitude.] What we've found is that we've cut our designated felony commitments in half.

**JUVENILE MALE:** I must set high goals, but they must be realistic.

**STEVEN TESKE:** Very proud of you!

**VICTORIA HARRIS:** We make a great impact working with the therapeutic approach because until we can treat that trauma, everything else that we are doing with the child is going to be ineffective.

**TIM DECKER:** When we have traumatized youth where their challenging behavior is dealt with through hours of isolation, who are restrained with handcuffs and shackles, we do further harm. We can't place young people in environments where we take all their choices away and we have this autocratic, coercive approach and then expect them to go home and make good choices. All of the young people served by Missouri DYS have committed some sort of juvenile offense, and about two-thirds of those are felony offenses. There's deliberate attention to creating environments that are as homelike and natural as possible. We're not just attending to the youth's behavior. We're also attentive to the trauma the youth has experienced. We go through a whole process designed to help them resolve their trauma. Research has shown that, for adolescents, the most effective. The second most effective are actually mentoring programs that actually help them develop healthy relationships. There's a real attention to having a structure that reinforces healthy boundaries and the staff being facilitators versus being guards or enforcers. Sometimes there's skepticism about, "How could it possibly be safe if there are not handcuffs and isolation rooms?" And what actually has been found in research is that young people in correctional models are four-and-a-half times more likely to be assaulted and injured than they are in Missouri DYS programs. So using a therapeutic and developmental approach actually achieves a public safety outcome.

**TOM NOBLET, DIRECTOR OF TREATMENT SERVICES, KALAMAZOO COUNTY JUVENILE HOME, MI:** Kids come into the system with a lot of unresolved trauma, most of the time, and they're acting out on that trauma through violence or fighting.

**FRANK WEICHLIN, RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT, KALAMAZOO COUNTY JUVENILE HOME, MI:** We've had kids in here whose siblings have been victims of homicides. We've had kids here who have been shot. The domestic violence within their homes is profound.

**TOM NOBLET:** Kids coming into the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home, it is about rehabilitation, it is about help, even though they're being contained and detained for doing something wrong. They're brought here because they victimized someone else in the community, and that needs to be dealt with. Our concern is for keeping the community safe so that more people don't get victimized. If we don't do something with them now, then they remain angry, they fight with staff, they fight with each other, and when they leave, we can expect them to return. The purpose is to try to help them get their lives back on track. We have a cognitive behaviorally based program where kids get interventions that target the areas of need.

**THERAPIST:** Let's talk about social skills today, guys.

**TOM NOBLET:** Anger management, substance abuse, intensive case management.

**THERAPIST:** What new thinking have you been using to reduce some of your high-risk thoughts and feelings?

**TOM NOBLET:** The services that are here can help them resolve some of the trauma and the victimization that the kids have experienced at some point in their life. Sixty-five percent of the kids who have gone through our residential program, after a year, have not been involved in any more criminal activity.

**FRANK WEICHLIN:** We just show them there's a different way to live, different way to make decisions, and be part of this community in a much more positive way.

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Office for Victims of Crime  
810 Seventh Street NW., Eighth Floor, Washington, DC 20531

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