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PH.D. DISSERTATION DEFENSE ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcing the Final Examination Defense of JENNIFER ALBRIGHT for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice and Criminology.

Date of defense: Friday; July 18, 2014
Time: 10:00 AM
Location: SAC 415 and JT 712 (AMS)
Dissertation Title: *Family Reconciliation through Remedial Detention: The Becca Bill's Unintended Consequences*

Dissertation Abstract:

Twenty years ago, in response to a young runaway's tragic murder, Washington made sweeping changes to its laws, giving parents and the Juvenile Courts increased latitude over managing the state's at-risk youth. Through subsequent revisions to the laws, loopholes in state and federal law and problematic implementation, the Becca bill has allowed for the secure detention of youth for status offenses since its inception. In King County, the state's largest detention facility, Becca youth have traditionally been completely sight and sound separated. However, due to increased pressure on county budgets, the County recently made a policy change allowing the co-mingling of Becca youth, who have committed no criminal offense, with more seriously delinquent offender youth. This study takes advantage of the pre- and post-housing change to compare the outcomes of Becca youth who are housed separately from and those that are co-mingled with offender youth.

The outcomes that were explored were subsequent referrals for prosecution, subsequent secure bookings, and ultimately contact with the adult criminal justice system. Outcomes suggest that there is no increased harm to the Becca youth that are co-mingled with more serious offender youth. Outcomes also suggest some harmful effects of detaining non-offender youth for any reason which confirms a growing body of research documenting the myriad harms wrought by even short periods of secure detention.

The state of Washington and King County have a choice in detaining Becca youth. They could be offered alternatives programs, or deferred from the system altogether which may ultimately decrease harm. However, this study suggests that housing decisions to separate or co-mingling have little effect on poor justice system outcomes.

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Jacqueline Van Wormer (Chair)
Dr. Zachary Hamilton
Dr. David Brody
Outside reader: Dr. Peter Collins

The defense is open to the public. Faculty and students are welcome to observe, ask questions, and comment. Those interested may request an electronic copy of the dissertation by contacting the Dissertation Chair (jvanwormer@wsu.edu).