

Factors determine delinquency

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dependency, the likelihood of death is quite high.”
The next factor to look at is the child's family. If family members don't get along, if there is poor communication, and low supervision, problems could arise.

“The extent to which parents are able to monitor their kids determines the chances of delinquency,” Mr. Cull said. “Disciplining a teenager is a really hard job. You're attempting to give them their freedom while making sure you know what they're doing.”

The final factor to look at is the community. Having a lack of things to do, poverty, and negative peer influences can all contribute to delinquency.

On the flip side, Mr. Cull looked briefly at reasons youths don't act out, giving parents an idea of ways to reduce the chances of delinquency. Among the reasons were good coping skills, a positive attitude towards authority, good school achievement, an authoritative parent style, involvement in organized recreational activities, and the absence of poverty.

This informational meeting is one of three components of the Capacity for Hope program. There is also a crisis line for parents of young offenders who have been in recent contact with the police, and a pre-court Youth Diversion program.

“If a child offends, he or she meets with a youth officer, a social worker and the parents at the police station,” said constable Carl Sapelak, a youth officer with Halton Regional Police. “The goal is to generate a diversion to benefit the community and the offend-

er.”
The idea of having an intervention directly related to offending behaviour was greeted enthusiastically by the parents.

The whole idea of this diversion program is that instead of having teens arrested for a first offence, and sending them to jail where they learn more criminal behaviour, the intervention team will look at the family situation and how to make it stronger.

If they re-offend, they go into the criminal system, but this intervention would make them accountable for their actions.

“The level of intervention needs to be matched with the level of need,” explained Mr. Cull. “If you incarcerate a shoplifter, it's like slapping a flea with a sledgehammer.”

To show the results intervention can have, Mr. Cull referred to a program in South Carolina where instead of incarcerating youths, there is an intensive six-month program to turn anti-social behaviour around. For one-fifth of the cost of sending a youth to jail, 50 per cent fewer youths are offending.

In Canada, there are five communities piloting this program, including Mississauga, Barrie, London and Ottawa.

Capacity for Hope information meetings are held bi-weekly and feature speakers from various agencies. Upcoming presentations include Halton Adolescent Support Services on Dec. 4 and ADAPT on Dec. 18.

For more information, contact Constable Carl Sapelak at 825-4747, ext. 2306.

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