

BEYOND THE HALFWAY HOUSE: TOGETHER, WE CREATE CHANCE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile offenders are one of the most vulnerable populations as they are at a young age and in conflict with the law. There were attempts to develop legislation, guidelines, procedures and services for juveniles in the criminal justice system, as well as treatments and prevention methods for juvenile delinquents for the purpose of reducing the number of juvenile delinquents continuously from time to time.¹ According to the United Nations, youth were quite disproportionately represented in statistics on crime and violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. Although in developed countries, such the USA, rates of juvenile delinquents, like crime rates in general, have been dropping for several years in a row, the number of violent crimes committed by youth had been increasing. It was also found in some countries, the proportion of violent crimes committed by youths had been increasing and violent crimes were committed at younger ages than in the past.

In Thailand, the number of juvenile offender cases decreased in recent years, from 30,361 cases in 2016, 26,089 cases in 2017, 22,609 cases in 2018 and 17,874 cases in 2020.² However, the number of juvenile offenders in total was a substantially small amount compared to the juvenile population in Thailand, and this number did not directly reflect problem behaviour in youths. It could also be inferred that a majority of these crimes were related to drugs or drug abuse as well as crimes in most countries. The proportion of drug abuse offences is the largest among other offences when considering the proportion between each offence.

Table A: The number of juvenile offender cases in Thailand from 2016-2020

Offence	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
Property	5,961	4,655	3,782	2,948	1,788
Life and Body	4,158	3,106	2,157	2,175	1,508
sexuality	1,412	1,314	1,038	922	698
liberty and reputation	883	702	566	517	369
Drugs	12,400	11,869	11,352	10,634	8,746
Weapon and explosive	2,262	1,527	1,119	951	671
Others	3,285	2,916	2,595	2,694	4,094
TOTAL	30,361	26,089	22,609	20,841	17,874

II. CURRENT TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection (DJOP), governed by the Ministry of Justice of Thailand, is the major agency responsible for juvenile delinquents who enter the juvenile justice system. In

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¹ United Nations (2016). *United Nations fact sheet on youth*. Retrieved July 10, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wyr11/FactSheetonYouthandJuvenileJustice.pdf>

² Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection (DJOP) (2021). *Annual Report 2021: Case Statistics*. Bangkok: Author.

compliance with The Juvenile and Family Court and Procedures Act B.E. 2553 (2010),³ the DJOP provides services for juvenile delinquents both before and after the court sentences. In relation to this, there are 77 juvenile observation and protection centres and 21 juvenile training centres across Thailand. Juvenile Observation and Protection Centres will provide juvenile offenders who have not reached the verdict with Risk and Need Assessment, psychological assessment, counselling, drug treatments and physical treatment, as well as provide report and individual treatment plans for the court, while Juvenile Training Centres will provide juveniles who are sentenced to training centre with education, vocational training, rehabilitation, behaviour modification, drug treatment as well as after release follow-up and related services. For the purpose of improving its potential and effectiveness in reducing juvenile delinquency and recidivism rates, the DJOP has developed, reformed, implemented many treatment and rehabilitation methods for juvenile offenders, as well as raising the use of alternative measures (restorative justice) in certain cases. Additionally, the DJOP has been working in collaboration with other agencies such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Office of the Narcotics Controls Board and the Office of Justice Affairs to promote the rule of law, knowledge and prevention of drug abuse, violence, corruption and crime for school students and risk groups of youth in community.

The concern for youths was not only the number of crimes committed by juveniles, but also the amount of recidivism that reflected the effectiveness of treatments and rehabilitations provided for those juvenile offenders. As recorded by the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, the recidivism rate (one year after release) raised from 13.57 per cent in 2009 to 20.37 per cent in 2013 and continuously raised to 22.49 per cent in 2021. Moreover, the recidivism rate at three years after release had reached 45.24 per cent of those released in year 2015, 43.12 per cent for those released in year 2016, 44.49 per cent for those released in year 2017 and 41.02 per cent for those released in year 2018.⁴

Table B: Percentage of juvenile reoffending (First year after release) of juveniles released from ordinary juvenile training centres from 2016-2020

Offence	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
Property	15.68	12.3	10.79	8.06	6.33
Life and Body	4.56	4.29	2.89	2.97	2.28
Sexuality	1.06	1.24	0.66	0.14	0.18
Liberty and reputation	0.95	0.56	0.26	0.28	0.18
Drugs	68.75	72.23	77.24	80.2	82.95
Weapon and explosive	5.08	4.4	3.42	3.39	1.76
Others	3.92	4.97	4.74	4.95	6.33
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table C: Percentage of juvenile reoffending (one-three years after release) of juveniles released from ordinary juvenile training centres from 2015-2019⁵

Year after release	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2019	Year 2019
One year	22.73	22.14	23.37	23.77	25.39
Two years	35.69	34.34	36.99	38.04	30.44
Three years	45.24	43.12	44.49	41.02	-

When recidivism rates kept rising, it could be inferred that current treatments or services provided for offenders may lack management to meet offenders' risks and needs as well as an effectiveness in reducing reoffending. Of the rising rate of recidivism, 80 per cent of reoffending juveniles are drug cases and another 10 per cent are burglary and robbery. This suggests that income and well-being of released juvenile offenders are of critical concern, and the DJOP's challenge is the improvement of effectiveness in the pre-release and reintegration process.

³ Office of the Council of The State. (2010). *The Act of Juvenile and Family Court and Procedure for Juvenile and Family Cases B.E.2553*. Bangkok: Author. http://web.krisdika.go.th/data/document/ext825/825511_0001.pdf

⁴ Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection (DJOP) (2021). *Annual Report 2021: Case Statistics*. Bangkok: Author.

⁵ Ibid.

III. DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE NEW REINTEGRATION MODEL

To increase the effectiveness of the pre-release and reintegration process, the DJOP considered how to increase well-being and job placement of juvenile offenders after release. There are a variety challenges in juvenile offender reintegration into the community. Researchers suggest imprisonment tends to increase disconnection from the community.⁶ Juvenile offenders commonly lack social skills, self-determination, self-confidence and empowerment. Also, the juvenile offender's family and community appear to be less understanding, less engaging and less supportive, which leads to juvenile adjustment difficulty in the transition period. In addition, employment opportunity and placement did not correspond with their skills, talents or preferences, which resulted in subsequent employment termination or resignation.⁷

Table D: Percentage of juvenile reoffending (one-three years after release) of juveniles released from Baan Kanchanaphisek training centre from 2016-2020

Year after release	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
One year	6.9	10.53	6.25	10.26	4.55
Two years	20.69	15.79	18.75	10.26	9.09
Three years	24.14	15.79	25	15.38	

Table E: Percentage of juvenile reoffending (one-three years after release) of juveniles with restorative justice from 2018-2020

Year after release	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
One year	5.2	6.7	3.6
Two years	11.01	11.17	
Three years	16.82		

By analysing the in-depth statistics and practices in the juvenile justice system, it has been found that Baan Kanchanaphisek training centre, which focuses more on empowering, life skills training, less secure confinement and more self-control for juvenile offenders, as well as restorative justice, results in a preferable rate of recidivism. At Baan Kanchanaphisek training centre, juvenile offenders are empowered through a variety of activities, and parents are required to participate in almost activity throughout the rehabilitation period. A method of less secure confinement is implemented to enhance self-control and the social skills of the juvenile offenders, as well as aggregating acceptance and engagement from the community. Similarly, restorative justice measures that provide juvenile offenders with an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves in community, together with the engagement of family. Both measures result in better reconnecting with the community, self-empowerment and a lower recidivism rate.

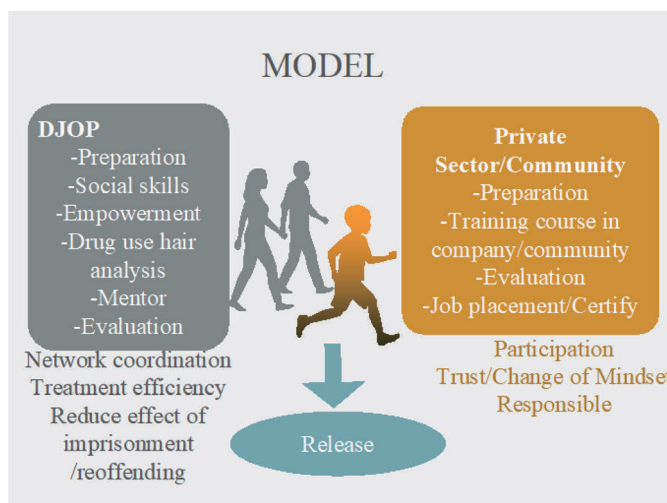
The DJOP, therefore, developed the new model to increase the chance of new life of juvenile offenders by bringing back the method of halfway houses, which merges juvenile offenders from training centred into the community while increasing the participation of private-sector organizations and the community, as well as using scientific assessment to guarantee juvenile self-control. The new model of pre-release and reintegration was designed to be implemented for pre-release juveniles in juvenile training centres.

The Model is divided into three periods: preparation, training and post-training. In the preparation period, juveniles who will be released in 6 months will have their behaviour, attitude, and readiness to enter the 3 months training programme assessed by both the DJOP (multi-disciplinary team) and the private sector organization that conducts the training. During the preparation period, the juveniles will attend the orientation which includes an empowerment session, family orientation and hair test for drug abuse assessment. The following training period will last three months. During the three months, juveniles will live on their own

⁶ Smith, Charisa Kiyô, Nothing About Us Without Us! the Failure of the Modern Juvenile Justice System and a Call for Community-Based Justice (March 23, 2013). *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing*.

⁷ Nally, John M., et al. "Post-release recidivism and employment among different types of released offenders: A 5-year follow-up study in the United States." *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences* 9.1 (2014): 16.

Figure A: new model of pre-release and reintegration



with training peers. They must travel to the training venues and the work office on their own. They will learn to manage their daily lives by themselves. A post-training evaluation will be made by the private-sector organization that conducts the training and the mentor. The drug test is conducted by hair analysis and is conducted once again during this period. If the juveniles perform very well, the private sector will consider offering them a secure job and provide them with a certificate of training to fill in the juvenile's profile. The DJOP also reports its evaluation to the court to consider an early release for the juveniles.

The pilot group was a small number of five juvenile offenders in a juvenile training centre in Bangkok and its vicinity from August to October 2021 (12 weeks). With the training course in Barista and Bakery offered by Bellinee's Bake and Brew Company which is the top-tier company and professional in Bakery and Café arena, the juveniles had the opportunity to learn to make beverages and baked goods, and the skills to communicate with customers, marketing and the management of a café. The result showed that juveniles in the pilot project were significantly empowered and gained more confidence, they were responsible and motivated to carry on a career after release, the participation of family has the best result in psychological support throughout the training and working period, and the most important thing is that they felt embraced as a part of the community and believe they can do better than commit crimes.

The DJOP is currently conducting the second and third juvenile groups with some modification in assigning clinical psychologists and social workers as mentors for each juvenile. The mentor will monitor, evaluate and help juveniles to overcome obstacles by counselling and paying regular visits. Juveniles, mentors and training supervisors have to evaluate emotions, stress, difficulty and performance weekly. Also, the model has added an orientation and extra sessions (within the training period) which concentrate on social skills development, cognitive skills development and self-empowerment for the juveniles and family. In addition, activities during the 12-week training period will be accumulated in a credit scoring system which can be redeemed for rewards at the end of the training.

IV. CONCLUSION

The development of the new model in pre-release and reintegration is beyond the traditional halfway house system which used to offer a solitary house for released juveniles until they could find their own place. The current model increased the chance to live a stable life after release, as well as the engagement of family that builds understanding and acceptance. Additionally, innovation in drug hair analysis in the juvenile monitoring system had the benefits of increasing juvenile self-control and awareness, and assuring juvenile behaviours to the family and community. Currently, the model is considering the best practice in cooperation among stakeholders, public agencies, private agencies, society and family, which complies with the DJOP's objective in reducing recidivism, and shall contribute to the guidelines, standards, regulations, structure and elements of private facilities established by the department in the near future.