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Moving and Delinquency Revisited

Residential Mobility may cause your child to start acting out

SAN JACINTO (CA), (UPDATED) May 20, 2025 — As adolescents try to form their identities and develop fulfilling peer relationships, researchers have realized that moving residences can be a disruptive event in the already turbulent life course of a child. Researchers have been analyzing the association between adolescent-delinquency and families moving homes for some time now. Trying to figure out if increased delinquency is directly effected by residential mobility or whether the issue is ever-changing, based off various determinants. The answer is found somewhere down the middle, between moving in itself and the various determinants that may persuade a family to pack-up and leave the area they have been residing in.

Research concluded that it is not the act of moving itself that causes delinquency, but rather the disruption of ties between parents and their children, children and their friends and other members of the community stemming from relocation. These challenges may be especially difficult to deal with for adolescents who are relocated, since these youth may also confront difficulties adjusting to new social and physical environments.

It was established that mobile adolescents usually

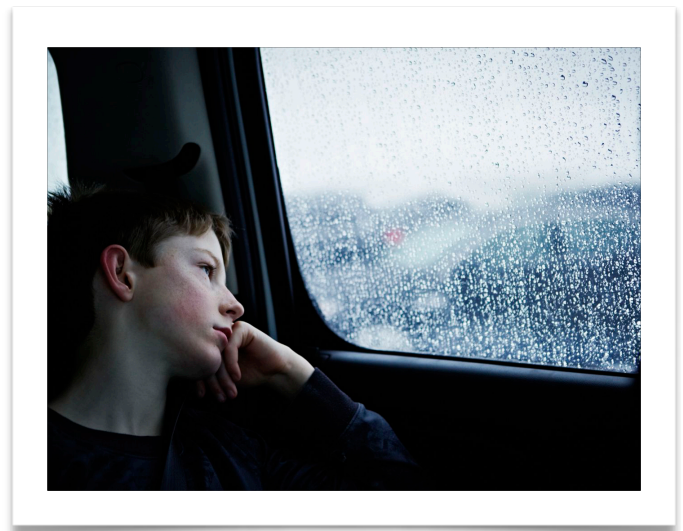


have parents that are slightly neglectful and isolated from their children's peers. It is from these depleting affects of mobility that leads to an alteration in the quality and behavioral composition of peer networks resulting in fewer friends, less popularity and further isolation.

The inability to make friends after moving and access cliques persuades children to form relationships with their more deviant peers. Since these groups are easier to get in to and are more welcoming, this leads to shifts in behavior and elevated levels of offense among the mobile youth. These vary disruptions can emotionally and psychologically affect control perspectives, making it harder for parents to regulate their child's behavior or the people they are spending much of their time with.

“Accordingly, mobility has been linked to a number of unfavorable outcomes among adolescents, including drug use, diminished psychological well-being, higher rates of suicide attempts, poor academic performance, higher likelihood of school dropout and increases in violent behavior” researcher, Lauren Porter, stated.

The less stable a family is and the more they move, (particularly those that move year to year), it increases the likelihood for children to engage in delinquent behavior. It is understood that not only the number, but the type of moves that adolescents experience can push them into negative behaviors and delinquency. Past and present neighborhood conditions as well as how far you've traveled can also influence behavioral factors.



This is not to say that families should not move. Many of them do because of divorce, causal job relations, finances or because they simply want to leave disordered neighborhoods. But, parents must take into account how their actions can impact the lives of their children as well as become more invested in how their children may feel about moving. It is during these troublesome times that parents should pay closer attention to how their youth respond to moving, as well as the company they keep, in order to cope with the negative emotions they may experience from these life changes.

Parents may not realize how much their living environment plays a big part in their child's development. Children begin to maintain a certain level of attachment to the areas they reside in for extensive periods of time. So, drastically moving them from these areas can impede on their sense of location, comfortability and can impact social environments. Wherever families decide to live, environment can shape how children use their mental and social abilities. Tossed into social environments, a child will likely experience a bunch of new situations but begin to learn from them and adapt.

They start to remember street signs and form connections with people in the community bringing a greater sense of familiarity. To strip them of this, forces them to start the process all over again causing frustration or even traumatic experiences for many adolescents. So for the parents who work all day and then come home to rebellious delinquents, ask yourself:

“How would you feel if everything you have grown to love and appreciate was gone because of a move you may or may not have wanted? Or maybe wasn’t even aware of?”

Better yet, start with asking your children that question...you may be surprised by their answer.