

WHAT PARENTS THINK

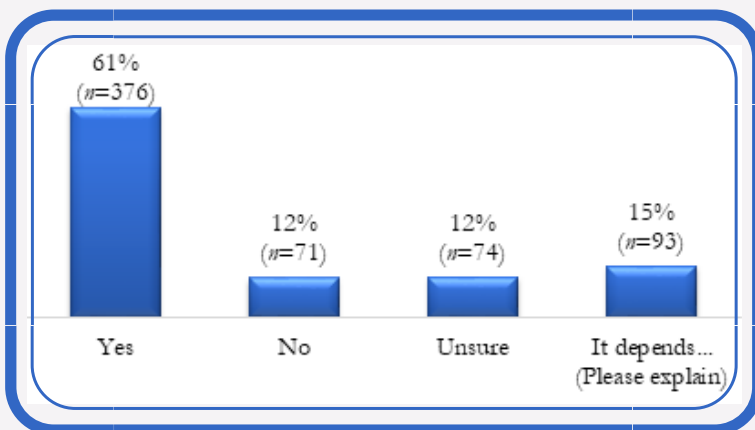


...PARENTAL MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TEEN BEHAVIOR AND CRIME

Almost every state holds parents and guardians accountable for their children’s behaviors and crimes up to a specific age, typically eighteen (18) years[1]. For parents, accountability for their teen’s behavior can be moral or legal. In the Texas Statewide Needs Assessment, parents surveyed were more likely to report that they should be held morally accountable than legally accountable for their child’s delinquent behaviors. Sixty-one percent (61% n=376) of parents surveyed believed that they should be held morally accountable for their teen’s behavior, 12% (n= 71) stated that they should not be held accountable and 12% (n= 74) indicated that they were “unsure.”

According to David Johnson, “victims often feel that the child’s parents are morally at fault for a child’s conduct[1]”. However, several parents surveyed asserted that parents/guardians have no control over their teen's

Figure 1:
Parental Perceptions about Moral Accountability for Teen’s Behavior and Crimes



behavior. In such cases, or when the teen has a “chemical imbalance,” the parents stated that acceptance of moral responsibility for the teens’ behavior might be reduced. At the same time, several parents questioned whether they could have prevented the crime or were “negligent” in allowing it to happen.

Most Texan parents surveyed indicated that it is essential to be involved in their teen’s lives as parent-child engagement can reduce the child’s vulnerability to delinquency and crime. For this purpose, parent engagement programs and training exist to support the parent and lessen the child’s risk of getting into conflict with the law.

[1] David, Landers. (2020). Parental Responsibility Laws and Personal Injury. <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/parental-responsibility-laws-personal-injury.html>
 [2] David Johnson. n.d. Holding Parents Liable for Their Children’s Crimes. p. 2. [https://www.winstead.com/portalresource/lookup/wosid/cp-base-4-12555/overrideFile.name=/1-Fort%20Worth_Holding%20Parents%20Liable%20\(D.%20Johnson\).pdf](https://www.winstead.com/portalresource/lookup/wosid/cp-base-4-12555/overrideFile.name=/1-Fort%20Worth_Holding%20Parents%20Liable%20(D.%20Johnson).pdf)

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Spend more time with your teen through more family-centered activities and have regular talks with your child. <http://www.yessafechoices.org/parents/tips-and-tools/get-involved-your-child%E2%80%99s-life>
- Get to know your teen’s friends and choice of company. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Getting-to-Know-Your-Childs-Friends.aspx>
- Always know your teen’s location through regular conversations (call or text).
- Educate yourself about and introduce your teen to mentorship programs that encourage the development of prosocial behaviors. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/mentoring>
- Parental training on intervention and teen management provide helpful tools to increase teen prosocial behaviors. <https://www2.tjcd.texas.gov/programregistryexternal/members/searchprograms.aspx>

WHERE CAN YOU GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs>
<https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/Topic/Details/89>
<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=365>
- Prairie View A&M University, the Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center <https://www.pvamu.edu/cojpp/texas-juvenile-crime-prevention-center/>
- SAMHSA family support <https://www.samhsa.gov/families/resources>
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services http://www.helpandhope.org/Parenting_Tips/Teens/default.asp

Figure 2:
Parental Perceptions about the Importance of Involvement in their Teen’s Life

	Know Teen's Location at All Times	Input into Teen's Activities	Input into Choice of Teen's Friends	Spend Time with Teen
Extremely Important	77%	55%	49%	80%
Very Important	19%	37%	35%	17%
Moderately Important	4%	7%	14%	3%
Slightly Important		1%	2%	

Did you know that...?

Parents shared that the degree of moral accountability would depend on:

- The crime committed
- Age of the teen and the teen’s friends
- Frequency of misbehavior
- Level of abuse in the home
- Parental intervention, or parental neglect within the household
- Parental contributions to the misbehavior in terms of modeling criminal behavior.

Parents also shared that it is important to involve themselves in their teen’s lives to reduce their vulnerability to delinquency and crime.

- Most of the parents (80%, n=489) reported that it is extremely important for them to spend time with their teens.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%, n=476) of parents indicated that it is always extremely important to know their teen’s location.
- Approximately half noted that it is extremely important to have input into their teen’s activities (55%, n=338) and choice of friends (49%, n=302)
- Parents perceive friends to have an above-average degree of influence on their teen’s behavior.

The Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center is committed to the reduction of juvenile delinquency and crime in the State of Texas. Through the creation of the Center and the College, Prairie View A&M University supports this mission as it strives to attain national recognition in the areas of education, research, and service. For more information about the Statewide Needs Assessment Survey go to: <https://www.pvamu.edu/cojpp/texas-juvenile-crime-prevention-center/research/>