

Wilderness and Adventure Therapy:  
Exploring Viable Alternatives to Traditional Juvenile Incarceration  
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**Abstract**

This paper examines wilderness therapy programs in terms of rehabilitation for adjudicated youth, and aims to answer whether or not wilderness therapy programs are a viable alternative to juvenile incarceration. This paper also looks into whether or not wilderness therapy is safe from a risk management perspective, and what problems exist in the field of wilderness therapy that could contribute to it not being a viable consideration. The research for this paper involved studying research by professionals in the wilderness therapy field and research from different justice institutes done on this topic.

It is widely known that being incarcerated at a young age can have a hugely detrimental effect on a person's life and can lead to life-long criminal activity depending on many circumstances. This paper delves into whether wilderness therapy can help provide better and more beneficial life trajectories for juveniles that have been convicted.

A key component of this research is recidivism, the rate of return to incarceration. Several of the studies reviewed in this paper mention recidivism in connection with comparing traditional incarceration/rehabilitation programs with wilderness therapy. There is some exploration of whether wilderness therapy could also help to combat the aptly named "school-to-prison pipeline", which systematically funnels at risk youth right out of school and into incarcerated situations. This could quite likely set them up for a much harder path in life. Wilderness therapy may be a better alternative that helps to produce more productive members of society and more effectively rehabilitates incarcerated youth. In conclusion the following research also examines recidivism rates in Cuba, Israel, and the United Kingdom, and whether or

not those countries implement wilderness therapy programs as alternatives to traditional detention.

*Key Words:* wilderness therapy, recidivism, self-efficacy, school-to-prison pipeline