

Your parents know where you have been. They also know you are on your way home. You are not doing anything wrong. It is not your fault the game went into overtime. How is this fair?

**Law-abiding teens may be paying the price for the few teens who break the law.**

**CRIME TIME** Scenes like this take place every day in thousands of U.S. towns and cities. One 1997 survey of the mayors of more than 300 major U.S. cities found that 80 percent of the cities had youth curfew laws. These laws state that kids under a particular age cannot be out of their homes during curfew times unless they are with an adult. The most common curfews are set for the hours between 10 P.M. and 6 A.M. Curfews usually affect kids seventeen years of age and younger.

The penalty for breaking curfew depends on where you live. In some cities, police will give you a warning and send you home. In other cities, curfew violators and their parents might get a fine of up to \$500. Juveniles might be sentenced to do community service, and in some cases, parents might even face jail time.

Some crimes are committed at night, including many of those that involve **violence**. Officials in cities that have curfews claim that keeping kids off the streets at night reduces crime. One city reported a 50 percent decrease in juvenile crime after a curfew went into effect.

Supporters of curfew laws say that keeping kids off the street at certain times also protects law-abiding teens. Even though these teens might not **cause** trouble themselves, they could be the victims of gangs or one-on-one **violence**.

To many adults, the streets at night are no place for teens to be hanging out. A spokesperson for the Chicago Police Department has said, "If you're sixteen or younger, you belong in the house, not standing on a street corner."

**PUNISHING THE WRONG PEOPLE** Not everyone agrees that teens standing on a street corner are a source of crime or trouble. People who **oppose** curfew laws believe that such laws punish law-abiding teens. These are teens who may be coming home late from sports events, study groups, or other lawful activities. These teens may be taken

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to a police station and held there if they are out after curfew. Their parents will then have to come and get them and possibly pay a hefty fine. Curfew **opponents** say that this is punishment these law-abiding teens and their parents do not deserve.

Law-abiding teens may be paying the price for the few teens who break the law. One Chicago teenager says, "It's not fair. They think all kids are bad, but we're not."

The **opposition** also questions some of the research results. Some studies show that curfew laws have no effect on teen crime at all. Some people argue that teen crime seems to be going down because all crime across the United States is going down and not because of curfews.

**Opponents** say that curfews are not the **solution** to teen crime. Supervised evening activities and increased gun and drug control would go further to **solve** the problem of teen crime. These efforts would help prevent crime in the first place. Besides, they would be more just than curfews that restrict *everyone*.

## WRAP IT UP

### Find It on the Page

1. What are the most common city curfew hours?
2. List two reasons youth curfew opponents give for their opinion.
3. Which statements in the article support the idea that youth curfews help reduce teen crime?

### Use Clues

4. How does each side in the curfew debate use the same data to support its views?

5. How would you change youth curfew laws to make them fairer to everyone? Explain.
6. Do you think youth curfew laws infringe on the rights of teenagers? Explain.

### Connect to the Big Question

Do you think youth curfew laws help reduce the amount of crime committed by teenagers? Explain why or why not.