

Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability Making the Most of Juvenile Apprehensions

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How often do you stop juvenile shoplifters from taking your merchandise and simply hope that the experience of being caught, along with the time and effort you put forth, is enough to prevent a repeat offense?

To assist retailers in their efforts, the National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP) offers the *Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability and Parent Support Program*. This program helps retailers maximize the impact of every apprehension, reduce repeat offenses and enhance customer and community relationships. The premise behind the concept is simple.

Today if you ask a juvenile *caught* shoplifting “Why did you do it?” the most frequent reply is “I don’t know” or “It’s no big deal” suggesting a lack of awareness about the crime as it relates to themselves, the store, their family and the community. In addition, many if not most parents of apprehended juveniles find themselves in a new and unfamiliar situation when called to pick up their child who was just caught shoplifting. While they want to try and remove every chance their child will shoplift again they are unsure where or how to begin.

The *Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability and Parent Support Program* is an effective yet surprisingly simple program for the LP toolbox. Retailers use the program to convey a message of support to parents (who are usually the store’s customers) and provide them with access to the education and guidance they often want and need to help their child get back on track. Through this program, retailers are reaching out to families in the community they serve, saying “We understand that kids sometimes make mistakes so we have partnered joined with a non-profit education organization to help you help your family.”

According to Caroline Kochman, Executive Director of NASP, “Making our court-approved programs available for use by the retailer provides the LP community with an opportunity

to turn a clearly negative customer contact into a more positive experience for the family.” In fact, 96% of parents and 84% of LP professionals surveyed say they believe it would be valuable for retailers to provide support to parents when their child has been caught shoplifting.

Moreover, this program complements and enhances the retailer’s existing programs and policies. “Retailers are beginning to find programs like this can sometimes be more effective (than prosecution) in preventing the next offense.” said Paul Jones, Vice President of Loss Prevention for the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA). “However, regardless of whether or not a retailer prosecutes juveniles, providing this information to support parents is good customer and community service and sound corporate citizenship.”

In fact, a program such as this is also more practical for the wider community – requiring fewer community resources – and is less costly all around. Policies for handling juvenile shoplifters are as varied as the communities themselves. The police may or may not respond, the prosecutor may or may not be willing to prosecute and the court may or may not provide substantive sanctions. The only constant is the retail community which is always the first touch point in a juvenile shoplifter’s experience – so what happens next and how effective it is in preventing another shoplifting offense is up to the retailer.

Participating retailers distribute *Parent Support Pamphlets* to the parent or guardian of apprehended youth. The pamphlet provides parents with facts and guidance to help them talk to their child about shoplifting as well as information about how to get their child help and education through the Youth Educational Shoplifting Program (Y.E.S. Program), an offense-specific home-study education program which discusses all aspects of shoplifting. Youth hear real-life stories from other teens about the perils of shoplifting. They learn why kids do it, who really gets hurt and have the opportunity to examine the attitudes, thoughts and misconceptions that led them to shoplift.



Participation in the Y.E.S. Program is a vital part of what the offending youth can do to make amends with the store, his/her family and the community. Participation serves to prevent future offenses including employee theft. In fact, according to court-documented recidivism studies, 97% of those who complete a NASP prevention program do not repeat the offense.

Do More With Less:

In these days of shrinking budgets and reduced staffing, this is an opportunity to *actually* do more with less. The tuition fees for all NASP education programs are offender-paid by design – it is part of taking responsibility for one’s actions. The only cost to the retailer is that of the pamphlets themselves, which run as low as \$.09 each. NASP also has a similar program for adult offenders.

The *Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability and Parent Support Program* is quickly proving to be not only a low cost shoplifting prevention tool, but an *excellent* customer service and public relations tool as well – as evidenced by the comments from parents, LP officers and participating youth.

Editor’s Note: The National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP) is a national, non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization whose mission is to raise public awareness about the harmful effects of shoplifting on youth, families and communities, unite public opinion toward constructive solutions, deliver needed programs and services and engage community action in prevention efforts to improve the lives of those affected and reduce the number of people who become involved.

For more information about the *Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability and Parent Information & Support Program* e-mail bcstaib@shopliftingprevention.org or visit www.shopliftingprevention.org

Comments about NASP’s *Juvenile Shoplifter Accountability and Parent Support Program*:

Parents

- “I am so thankful to the store. They did the research for me. I would have had to start looking for something to help my child on my own.”
- “I’m a single dad raising my daughter, I can’t tell you how helpful it was to be provided with this information”
- “I am an educator myself...it is so nice to see corporate America doing their part”

LP Officers

- “Parents in my area have been asking for information about help for their child for a long time. It feels great that I can actually offer them something now.”
- “When I present the program to the parents, their attitudes change for the better.”
- “My entire team is quite excited about doing something positive with these kids.”

Juveniles

- “Getting caught, and going through this program put everything into perspective for me.”
- “For the first time, I feel like I am on a good path and have a chance at a promising future.”
- “This was a powerful experience and I am grateful for the opportunity to participate.”