Susan and Anthony Provenzino of St. Clair Shores, Michigan, were aware that their son Alex was experiencing difficulties. He was arrested in May 1995, and the Provenzinos obtained Alex's release from juvenile custody in the fall of 1995, fearing that he would be mistreated by violent juveniles housed in the facility. Over the course of the next year, Alex was involved in a burglary, excessive drinking, and using and selling marijuana. Alex verbally abused his parents at home and, on one occasion, attacked his father with a golf club. In May 1996, the Provenzinos were convicted of violating a two-year-old local ordinance that placed an affirmative responsibility on parents to "exercise reasonable control over their children." The jury required only fifteen minutes to find them guilty; each was fined $100 and ordered to pay $1,000 in court fees.

Roughly seventeen states and cities today have similar **parental responsibility laws**. States have a long history of passing laws against parents who abuse, neglect, or abandon their children or fail to ensure that their children attend school. In 1903, Colorado was the first state to punish "contributing to the delinquency of a minor." Similar provisions were subsequently adopted by roughly forty-two states and the District of Columbia. These statutes are not limited to parents; and they require some affirmative act on the part of an adult that aids, encourages, or causes the child's delinquent behavior.

The first wave of parental responsibility statutes was passed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when various states and municipalities adopted laws holding parents strictly and vicariously liable for the criminal