

Invest in—not Cut—Programs for Kids to Reduce Crime and Grow Maine’s Economy

A Research Brief by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is an anti-crime organization of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence, and youth violence experts nationwide, including 45 in the State of Maine.

Federal and state funding proposals currently under consideration would cut almost 3,000 of Maine’s children from after-school programs and 1,000 from pre-kindergarten and child care. Unfortunately, these cuts would move Maine in exactly the wrong direction, resulting in significantly more crime and higher crime costs. Instead of cutting, the federal and state governments should fully fund programs that research shows will result in lower crime and drug use, higher graduation rates, and lower rates of welfare enrollment.

Children Denied Services

Rather than providing the resources that after-school programs need to offer quality services, the Bush Administration has proposed a 40% cut in the federally funded after-school program, 21st-Century Community Learning Centers. This will cost Maine \$2 million and eliminate services to almost 3,000 kids.

In addition, the federal and state governments are considering proposals to flat-fund or possibly reduce child care subsidies for the next two years. If the state proposal is passed, Maine would not be able to keep pace with the number of families that need services. Furthermore, the rising costs faced by child care providers would eliminate services for up to 1,000 children over this time period.

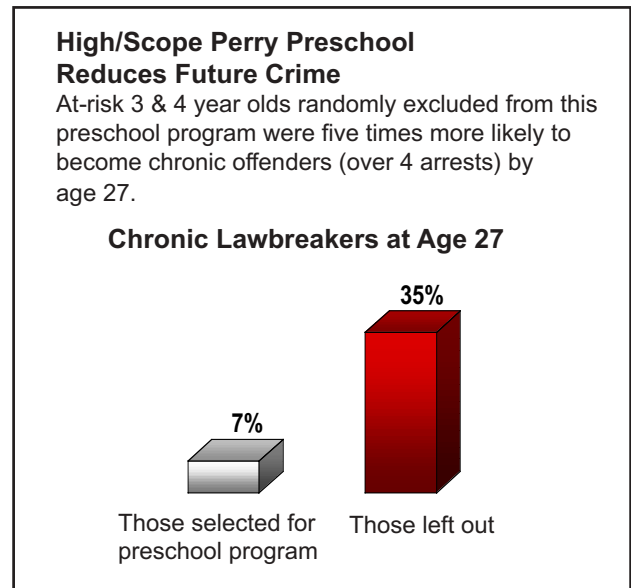
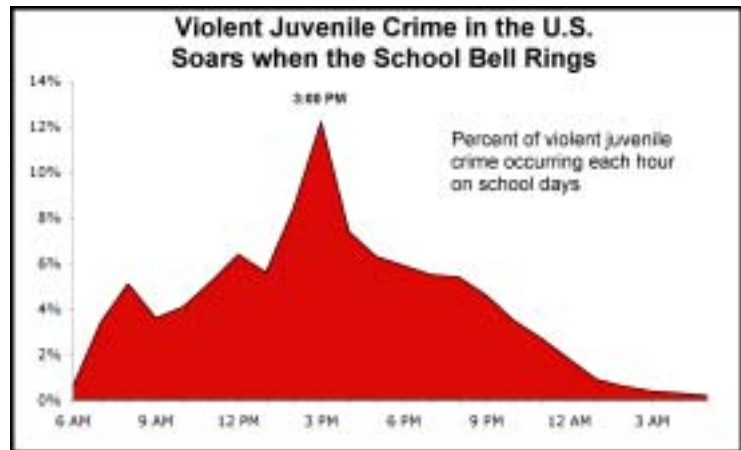
“Child Storage” or Quality Programs

Sixty-five percent of children under six in Maine have both parents, or their only parent, in the workforce. The reality is that most children under age six are in the care of someone other than their parents during the workday. The question is whether they are in “child storage”, perhaps parked in front of a TV set, or in quality programs that help them learn to get along with others and start school ready to succeed.

Many parents, however, cannot afford the cost of quality services. In Cumberland County, child care center tuition averages nearly \$7,000 annually. To put this in perspective, average tuition at a public university in Maine is \$4,925. And services for two children can exceed \$13,300—more than a full-time, minimum-wage earner makes yearly. Many parents cannot pay this any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten and Child Care Cut Crime

Research shows that quality programs, especially for at-risk children, can change the course of their lives. For example, children from low-income families who were randomly assigned at ages three and four to receive the High/Scope Perry Preschool program in Michigan were five times less likely to become chronic lawbreakers as



adults. Chicago’s publically-funded Child-Parent Centers have served 100,000 three- and four- year-olds since 1967, and research shows that similar children from low-income neighborhoods were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime than those who attended the program.

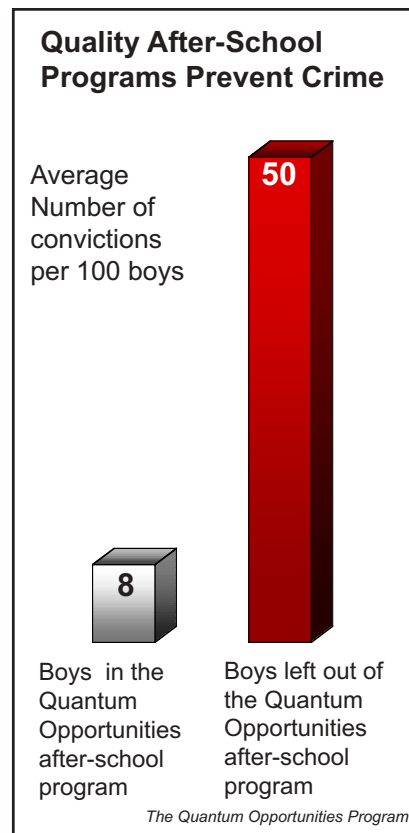
After School is Prime Time for Juvenile Crime

When the school day ends, many students across Maine are turned out on the street without constructive activities or supervision. National data show that over ten million children and teens are unsupervised after school. This is when the prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the hours from 3-6 PM are the peak hours for teens to:

- Commit crimes.
- Be in or cause a car crash.
- Become victims of crime.
- Smoke, drink, or use drugs.

Quality After-School Programs Cut Crime

Quality after-school programs can transform hours of soaring crime, drug use, and car crashes into hours of constructive, supervised activities where children build values and skills needed to succeed in school and become contributing adults. For example, high school freshmen from welfare families were randomly assigned to participate in the four-year Quantum Opportunities after-school program. Six years later, boys who did not participate in the program averaged six times more criminal convictions than participants. Boys and girls left out were four times more likely to be without a high school degree.

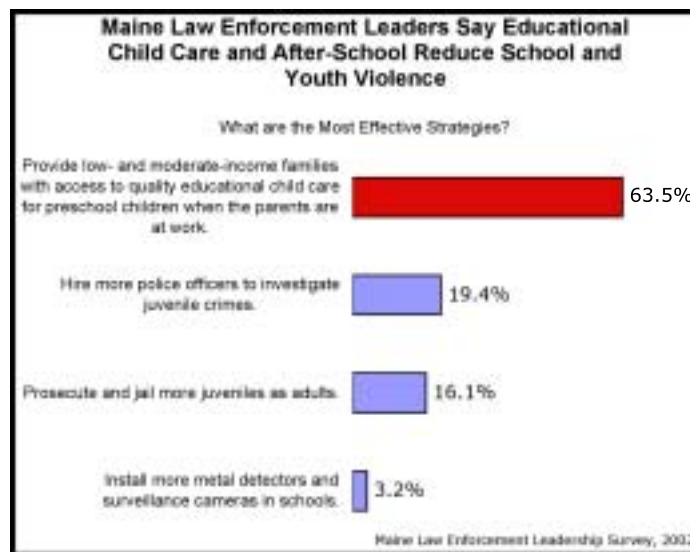


Investments that Save Money

The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved more than \$7 (including more than \$6 in crime savings) for every \$1 invested. The Child-Parent Center study showed similar savings. The Quantum Opportunities after-school program produced benefits to recipients and the public of \$3 for every \$1 spent, without even counting the savings from a six-fold drop in crime by boys in the program. Failing to invest in quality pre-kindergarten, child care and after-school programs squanders billions.

Law Enforcement is United

The more than 2,000 members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But those on the front lines in the fight against crime also know that it’s impossible to arrest and imprison our way out of the crime problem. Law enforcement leaders in Maine were surveyed by the independent polling firm, Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. When asked to choose which strategies are the most effective crime prevention tools, they overwhelmingly chose providing “...access to quality educational child care for preschool children” even over “hiring more police officers to investigate juvenile crime”. It is time to invest in these proven programs.



Source citations and other research are available at www.fightcrime.org
 FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, 2000 P St., NW, Ste 240, Washington D.C., 20036, 202-776-0027.
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Endnotes

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