

America's Child Care and Pre-k Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

A research brief by

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

This brief summarizes the report of an expert panel convened by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, an anti-crime group of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence, and youth violence experts. The authors are: Harvard pediatrician **T. Berry Brazelton**; Yale child development expert **Edward Zigler**; University of Pennsylvania criminologist **Lawrence Sherman**; Los Angeles police chief **William Bratton** and former San Diego police chief **Jerry Sanders**, and FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' president **Sanford Newman** and research director **William Christeson**. The full report and citations for this brief are available at www.fightcrime.org.

Summary

The members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS believe in tough law enforcement. Dangerous criminals need to be behind bars. Law enforcement leaders also know from experience that intervening early in a child's life is the best way to prevent crime. Research shows that quality educational child care for preschool-age children and after-school programs for older kids lead to lower rates of crime, drug use and welfare dependence, and to higher rates of high school graduation as the children grow up. Tragically, inadequate funding denies thousands of eligible children access to these programs.

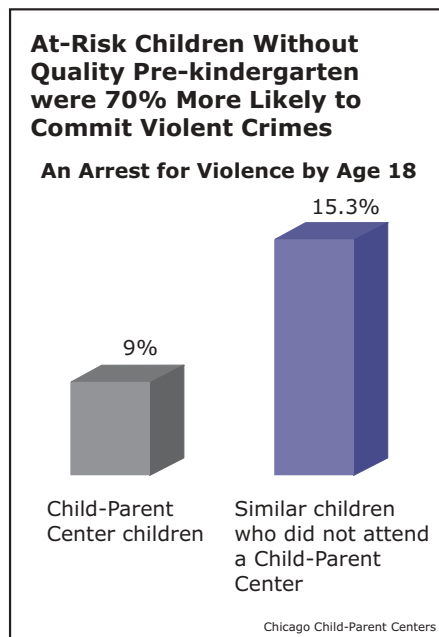
Quality Child Care Cuts Crime

Research proves that quality educational child care, especially for at-risk children, cuts later crime. For example:

- Chicago's federally-funded Child-Parent Centers have served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds from low-income neighborhoods since 1967. Research shows that similar children were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who attended the program. This program will have prevented an estimated 33,000 crimes by the time the children already served reach the age of 18.
- Michigan's High/Scope Perry Preschool program served three- and four-year-old children from

low-income families. Children randomly assigned to a control group were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers as adults than those assigned to attend the program.

- Children who were not enrolled in early childhood education centers with North Carolina's Smart Start quality improvement assistance demonstrated significantly more behavioral problems than children who attended centers with the Smart Start services.
- Large national studies showed that children who are traditionally at risk of doing poorly in school and who were enrolled in high quality preschool programs had no more behavior problems at age eight than children who were not at risk. In contrast, when at-risk children received poor quality care their earlier levels of problem behaviors persisted.



Most at-risk kids, even with poor child care services, become contributing adults. Nevertheless, failing to assure access to quality programs multiplies the risk that these children will become involved in crime and violence and decreases the likelihood that they will ever achieve their full potential.

Parents Need Help Paying for Child Care

In every state, the average cost for an infant to attend an urban child care center is higher than the

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average tuition at a public college. Services for two children can easily exceed \$12,000 annually, more than the annual income of a full-time minimum-wage worker.

Many working parents cannot afford the cost of quality educational child care any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed. As with public schools, we all have a stake in seeing that children get a good start.

Government is Dropping the Ball

The federally-funded Head Start program for children in poverty is so under-funded that it can serve only six out of ten eligible three- and four-year-olds, and can serve most of them for only part of the time parents are working.

The federally-funded Child Care and Development Block Grant, designed to help low-income parents pay for child care, can serve only one out of eight eligible children, and provides funds too meager for parents to purchase quality care.

Some state initiatives, like Georgia's universal pre-kindergarten programs and North Carolina's Smart Start, are making major contributions. But no state

Quality Pre-kindergarten Saves Money

Taxpayers, victims, and participants saved over \$7 for every \$1 invested in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers pre-kindergarten program.



For every \$1 invested

Over \$7 were saved

Chicago Child-Parent Centers

has come close to meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income working families for quality educational child care.

Quality Child Care Saves Money

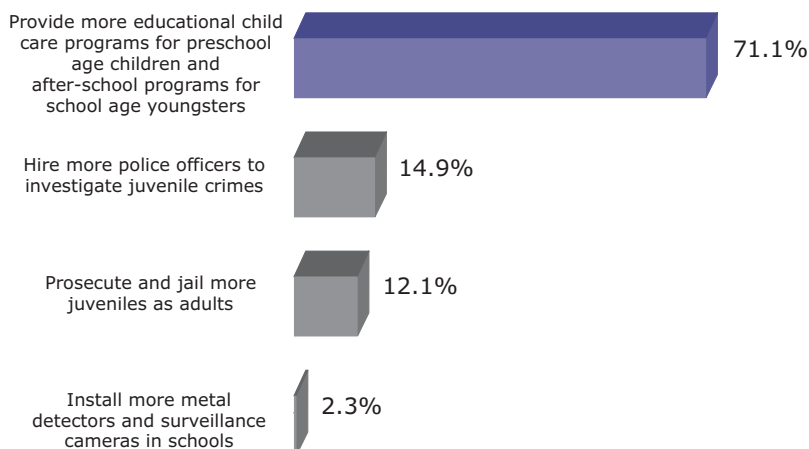
Not only does quality child care cut crime, but studies show denying these services to children results in higher costs to taxpayers. The High/Scope Perry Preschool program and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that they saved more than \$7 for every \$1 invested.

Law Enforcement is United

Law enforcement leaders and researchers agree: more of our nation's children, especially those most at-risk, must have access to quality child care programs if later crime is to be prevented. It is time to invest in programs proven to help kids avoid crime and prevent thousands of Americans from becoming victims of violence.

National Law Enforcement Leaders Choose Investments in Kids as Best Strategy to Reduce Crime

Which strategy would have the greatest impact on reducing youth violence and crime?*



*Many respondents favored adopting more than one strategy, and a majority ranked hiring more police officers as the second most effective strategy.

Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, 2002

Endnotes:

- Quality Child Care Cuts Crime

Chicago Child-Parent Center research results:

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(18), 2339-2346.

High/Scope Perry Preschool research results:

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

North Carolina's Smart Start research results:

Maxwell, K., Bryant, D., & Miller-Johnson, S. (1999). *Smart Start: A six-county study of the effects of Smart Start Child Care on kindergarten entry skill*. Retrieved from the University of North Carolina Web site: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~smartstart>

Large national studies research results:

Peosner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Yazejian, N., Culkin, M. L., Zelazo, J., Howes, C., Byler, P., Kagan, S. L., & Rustici, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school*. Retrieved from the University of North Carolina Web site: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pages/cq.htm>

- Parents Need Help Paying for Care

Average cost for an infant to attend an urban child care center has been higher than the average tuition at a public college:

Schulman, K. (2000). *The high cost of child care puts quality care out of reach for many families*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

Services for two children can easily exceed \$12,000:

Schulman, K. (2000). *The high cost of child care puts quality care out of reach for many families*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

Annual salary of a full-time minimum-wager earner:

U.S. Department of Labor. (2003). *Compliance assistance—Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/flsa/index.htm>. Minimum wage in the United States is \$5.15 per hour. An annual salary of \$10,712 was computed by multiplying: \$5.15 x 40 hours per week x 52 weeks per year.

- Government is Dropping the Ball

Head Start can serve only six out of ten eligible three- and four-year-olds:

The percentage of income eligible children who are enrolled in Head Start was computed by dividing the number of 3- and 4-year-old children served in 2001 (n=805,659) by the number of 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty in 2001 (n=1,369,000). For number of 3- and 4-year-old children served by Head Start, see: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Head Start Bureau. (n.d.). *2002 Head Start fact sheet*. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/factsheets/02_hsf.htm. For number of 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty, see: U. S. Bureau of the Census, & Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2002, September). Detailed poverty tables: 2001 P60 package. In *Annual demographic survey: March supplement*. Retrieved from http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/pov/new23_001.htm

Child Care and Development Block Grant can serve only one out of eight eligible children:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). *Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Children served in fiscal year 1999 (average monthly)*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2000/cctable.htm>

- Quality Child Care Saves Money

High/Scope Perry Preschool and Chicago Child-Parent Centers cost savings:

For High/Scope, see: Barnett, S. W. (1993). Cost benefit analysis. In L.J. Schweinhart, H. V. Barnes, & D. P. Weikart (Eds.), *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27* (pp. 143-173). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press. For Chicago Child-Parent Centers, see: Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2002). Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(4), 267-303.

- Law Enforcement is United

Law Enforcement Poll results:

In response to a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, an overwhelming 71 percent of the nation's law enforcement leaders chose providing "more educational child care programs for preschool age children and after-school programs for school age youngsters" as the strategy with the greatest impact in reducing youth violence and crime. Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2002, August). *National law enforcement leadership survey*. Retrieved from the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Web site: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/nationalkidspoll2002.pdf>