



Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement
Leaders, and Violence Survivors
Preventing Crime and Violence

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From Michigan's Front Line Against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

As a statewide organization of more than 400 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders, and violence survivors, we are determined to see that dangerous criminals are put behind bars. But anyone who thinks that jailing a criminal undoes the agony of crime has not seen crime up close.

Michigan's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the research-based programs that help kids get the right start in life—programs like Head Start, pre-kindergarten and educational child care, child abuse and neglect prevention, youth development activities for the after-school and summer hours, and intervention programs proven to help troubled kids.

Yet today, inadequate funding for these critical crime-prevention investments leaves thousands of children at needless risk of becoming violent or delinquent teens and adult criminals—and leaves every Michigian at risk of becoming a crime victim. In 2005, 55,877 violent crimes were reported to Michigan police departments, an average of 153 per day.

We call on Michigan's federal, state and local officials to implement a four-part plan to dramatically reduce crime and violence, and help Michigan's young people learn the skills and values they need to become good neighbors and responsible adults. While no plan can prevent every violent act, this common-sense approach—based on our experience and the latest research about what really works to fight crime—can make all of us safer and save tax dollars.

State Law Enforcement organizations support this plan:

- ✓ Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police
- ✓ Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan
- ✓ Michigan Sheriffs' Association

Dozens of national and other state law enforcement and victim assistance organizations across the country have adopted similar resolutions supporting the components of the FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

Four Actions to Dramatically Reduce School and Youth Violence

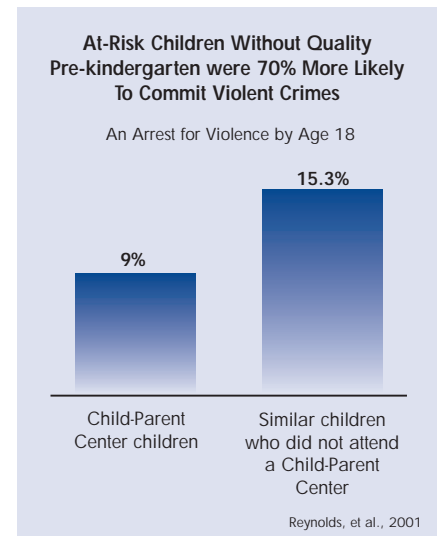
- Provide all families access to quality preschool and educational child care programs proven to reduce crime.
- Help at-risk parents improve their parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by offering in-home parenting coaching. Make sure child protective services have policies and resources sufficient to protect and heal abused and neglected children.
- Provide all school-age children and teens access to after-school youth development programs to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime."
- Identify troubled children and teens as early as possible, intervene and provide them and their parents with the training and counseling necessary to help them avoid crime.

1. Provide all families access to quality preschool and educational child care programs proven to reduce crime.

Law enforcement leaders have long known that intervening early in children's lives is the best way to prevent violence and crime. Rigorous social science and neuroscience studies now provide evidence that supports what many have known from experience: in the first few years of life, children's intellect and emotions, and even their ability to feel concern for others (a prerequisite to conscience) are being permanently shaped. When parents are at work trying to make ends meet, high quality programs for children, age birth to 5, can not only prepare them to succeed in school but also reduce later crime. For example:

- Chicago's publicly-funded Child-Parent Centers have served almost 100,000 3- and 4-year-olds since 1967. Researchers tracked 989 of those children and 550 similar children not in the program for 14 years. The children who did not participate were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. This program also cut child abuse and neglect (see Section 2).
- In Ypsilanti, Michigan, 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families who were randomly assigned to a group that did not receive preschool were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than those who were assigned to the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Perry Preschool program.

More than 66 percent of Michigan's more than 749,000 children under age 6 have both parents or their only single parent in the workforce. Currently, Michigan only marginally funds pre-kindergarten programs leaving a large unmet need. When parents are forced to leave their children in inadequate educational child care, we all pay a terrible price.



“We need to help give at-risk kids the right start so that they’re ready to learn when they get to school and less likely to take the path toward crime and violence. Quality child care and school readiness programs are proven to give children that opportunity.”

– Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth,
Ingham County

2. Help at-risk parents improve their parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by offering in-home parenting coaching. Make sure child protective services have policies and resources sufficient to protect and heal abused and neglected children.

In 2004, more than 29,805 children were abused or neglected in Michigan. Studies show that being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be violent. It is imperative to expand parenting-coaching and family support programs that prevent children from being abused and neglected, reduce subsequent delinquency, and improve other outcomes for children. Research has proven the success of these programs:

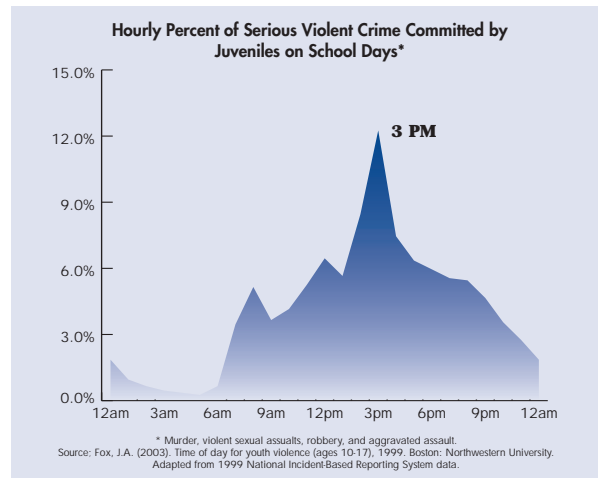
- Michigan's “0-3 Secondary Prevention Initiative,” which provides services such as home visits and parent coaching, has significantly reduced child abuse referrals.
- The Nurse-Family Partnership randomly assigned half of a group of at-risk families to receive visits by specially-trained nurses who provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Beginning during the mother's pregnancy and continuing until the child's second birthday, parents learned to manage stress, understand the health and nutrition needs of newborns, identify the signs of problems, make their home safe, and find resources such as doctors and other child care help. Rigorous research originally published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed the program could prevent as many as half of all cases of abuse or neglect among at-risk families. By the time the children of the mothers in the program were age 15, they had 59 percent fewer arrests than the children of mothers left out of the program.
- Chicago's Child-Parent Centers preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds from poor neighborhoods includes a strong parental involvement requirement. Children who participated in the preschool program and similar children who did not participate were tracked by researchers until age 18. The study found that abuse and neglect of children in the program was cut in half.

There must be a national and statewide commitment to provide child protective, foster care and adoption services with comprehensive policies, resources, and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal children who have been abused and neglected.

3. Provide all school-age children and teens access to after-school youth development programs to shut down the “Prime Time for Juvenile Crime.”

In the hours after the school bell rings—when thousands of children and teens hit the streets with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision—violent juvenile crime soars and the prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the peak hours for juvenile crime are from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. These are also the hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime. Being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that 8th-graders will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.

Quality youth development programs in the after-school hours can cut crime immediately and transform this prime time for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect both kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut smoking and drug use, while helping youngsters develop the respect, discipline and skills they need to become contributing citizens. For example:



- Five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the housing projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity. The study was conducted in several U.S. cities.
- Among kids with prior histories of arrest, those who did not participate in San Francisco’s Bayview Safe Haven after-school program were twice as likely to be arrested during the six-month initial “intervention” period as program participants. Among kids with no prior histories or arrest, those who did not participate were three times more likely to be arrested during that same intervention period.
- Young people who were randomly assigned to a Big Brother or Big Sister were about half as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly one third less likely to hit someone compared to those who were assigned to a waiting list.

4. Identify troubled children and teens as early as possible, intervene and provide them and their parents with the training and counseling necessary to help them avoid crime.

Children who are overly aggressive are at risk for problems later in life. Early screening and intervention through social skills training, counseling or other help for children and their families can get kids back on track.

- The Incredible Years program provides training in problem solving and social issues for families of children age 2 to 8 with overly aggressive behavior problems. Researchers report that it has been able to stop the cycle of aggression for approximately two-thirds of the families receiving help.
- A study found that 40 percent of school bullies had three or more criminal convictions as adults. Tested anti bullying programs, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, cut bullying by as much as half.

Many youths who are already involved in crime can become productive citizens with the right help.

- Three intensive family intervention programs that provide the parents or foster parents of violent juvenile offenders with effective tools to better control the children’s behavior have been proven to cut crime. Research shows that repeat arrests of youths in Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care have been cut by as much as half compared to the re-arrest rate of youths not receiving this help.

“Investing now in our most vulnerable children is the best way to prevent crime. It helps put kids on the right track and makes everyone safer.”

– **Denise Smith**, former probation officer and crime survivor, Detroit

- Another approach, known as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, helps serious juvenile offenders learn and use social skills to avoid re-offending. Research studies show CBT reduces re-arrests among troubled youths by one-third to two-thirds compared to those not receiving the services.

The Bottom Line: Investing in Kids Saves Lives and Money

When Michigan fails to invest in children, all Michigan citizens pay far more later—not just in lost lives, but also in tax dollars. The Michigan Treasury will actually have more money to dedicate to other uses in the future by investing today in programs to help kids get the right start in life. Research clearly demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of these programs:

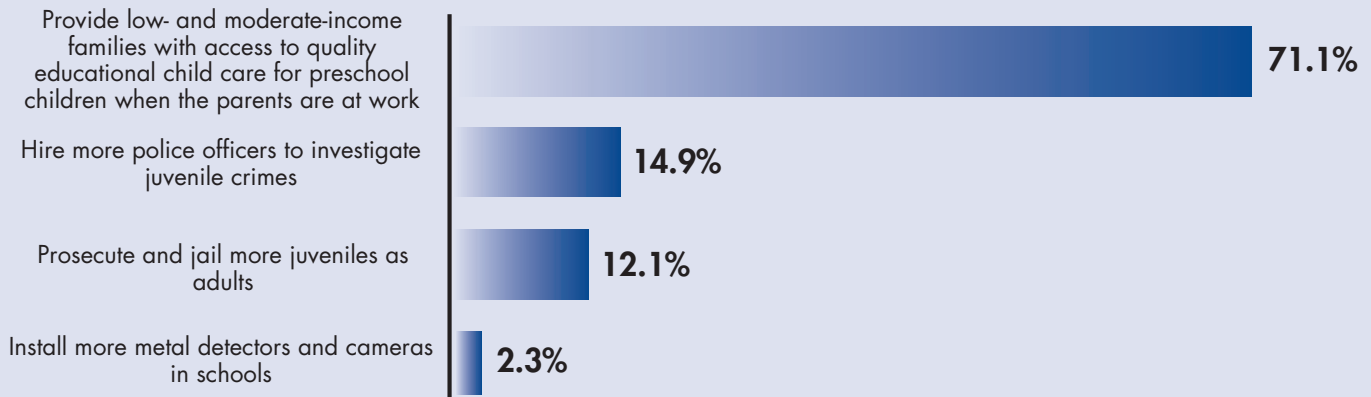
- Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation’s Perry Preschool program produced a net savings of \$17 for every dollar invested. Total savings were \$259,000 per child, \$172,000 of it in crime costs.
- A study conducted by researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis showed that the return on investment in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program was 16 percent after adjusting for inflation. Seventy-five percent of that return went to taxpayers in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs, and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent after adjusting for inflation. Thus, an initial investment of \$1,000 in a program like Perry Preschool would return over \$19,000 in 20 years while the same initial investment in the stock market would return less than \$4,000.
- Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country saves \$1.7 million.

“The time to divert people from a life of crime is when they’re children. By the time they are adults, the greatest opportunity is lost.”

– **Prosecutor David Gorcyca,**
Oakland County

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

Which strategy would have the greatest impact in 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

For citations of studies referred to above visit www.fightcrime.org



Launched in 2001, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS MICHIGAN is a bipartisan, anti-crime organization led by more than 400 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It is supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations, and receives no funds from federal, state, or local governments. It is a project of the Washington, D.C.-based FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national, non-profit organization led by more than 3,000 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. Major funding is provided by the Joyce Foundation, The Skillman Foundation, and The Frey Foundation.

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