

# Rhode Island's Child Care Challenge: A Crime Prevention Opportunity

A research brief by

## **FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**

This brief is based on a report of an expert panel convened by **FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**, an anti-crime group of 1,000 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**; former police chiefs **William Bratton** of New York and **Jerry Sanders** of San Diego, and **FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS**' president **Sanford Newman** and research director **William Christeson**. **The full report and references for this brief are available at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).**

### **Quality Child Care Cuts Crime**

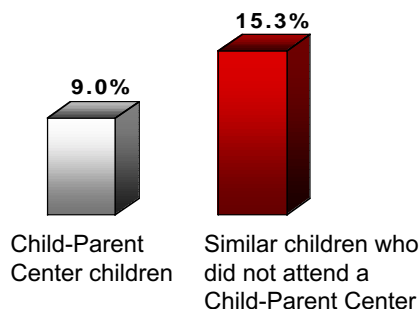
Child care is a reality today for an estimated 13 million American children under age six. Over 59% of Rhode Island mothers of children under age six are in the labor force. Despite some recent misleading headlines, the good news is that quality care can cut crime and violence.

- New research reported in JAMA tracked for 15 years over 900 children who had been enrolled in government-funded Child-Parent Centers while 3- and 4-year olds. Compared to the children in the program, similar children left out of the program had 70% more violent arrests in their teens.
- An earlier 22-year study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool program showed that leaving at-risk children out of this program multiplied by 5 times the risk that they would become

#### **Children Not in the Child-Parent Centers Had 70% More Violent Arrests by Age 18**

Compared to the three- and four-year-olds enrolled in this quality child care program, those left out were 70% more likely to have a violent arrest by age 18.

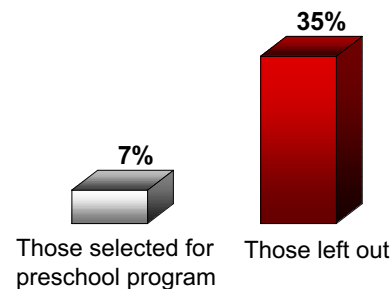
##### **A Violent Arrest by Age 18**



#### **High/Scope Perry Preschool Reduces Future Crime**

At-risk 3 & 4 year olds randomly excluded from this preschool program were five times more likely to become chronic offenders (over 4 arrests) by age 27.

##### **Chronic Lawbreakers at Age 27**



chronic lawbreakers as adults.

- Large studies show that at-risk kids who attend quality child care have no more behavior problems at age eight than children of college-educated moms. But at-risk kids who receive poor quality care had significantly more problem behaviors.

Short-term data from an NICHD study suggests kids who spent little time in child care scored lower than others on school readiness but were also unusually non-aggressive in kindergarten (though this may only reflect shyness in unfamiliar settings). For many working parents, however, the question is only whether the child care they can afford will be good or poor care. What remains clear from this study and others showing long-term effects is that quality child care for poor children reduces later disruptiveness, crime, and violence.

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## Parents Need Help Paying for Quality Child Care

In 1998, average tuition at a public university in Rhode Island was \$4,158. Tuition for a 4-year old in a child care center averaged \$6,365 a year. Younger children cost even more, so care for two children can exceed \$14,000—more than a full-time, minimum wage earner makes in a year. Many Rhode Island parents can't pay this any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools were eliminated.

In addition, low child care center teacher wages in Rhode Island, averaging only \$16,820, too often result in high staff turnover, inadequately-trained staff, and low quality care.

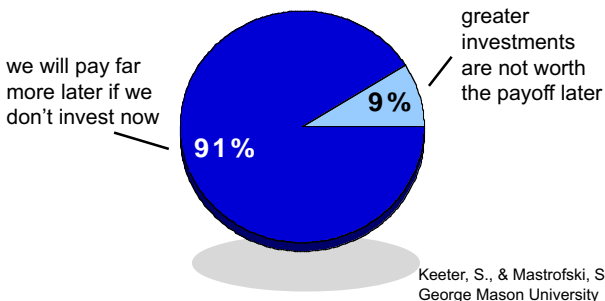
## Governments are Dropping the Ball

Head Start, the principal federal child development program for children in poverty, is so under-funded that it could serve only about 5 of 10 eligible 3- and 4-year olds in Rhode Island in 2000 and (along with Early Head Start) only about 2 of 10 eligible children aged 0 to 5.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant, to help low-income parents pay for child care, could serve only 15% of eligible Rhode Island children in 1999, and provided funds too meager to purchase adequate care.

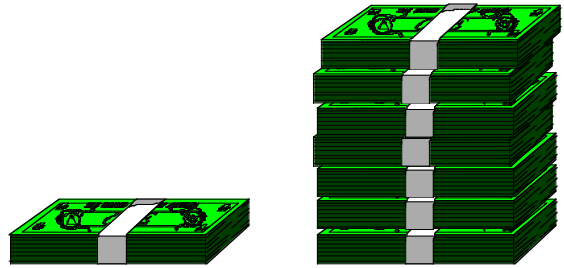
### Police Chiefs Say Child Care Will Reduce Crime, Save Money

9 out of 10 agreed: "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs."



### Educational Child Care Saves Money

Even after accounting for inflation, the public saved over \$700 for every \$100 invested in a preschool and home visitation program.



For every \$100  
Invested

Over \$700 was  
saved

High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

Rhode Island recently increased its funding for child care from \$12 million to \$59 million. But much more still needs to be done to meet the need for quality child care for the state's low- and moderate-income working families.

## Investments that Save Money

The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved \$700 for every \$100 invested. The Child-Parent Center study showed similar savings. Failing to invest in quality child care now squanders billions, much of which could otherwise be used for Social Security, tax cuts, or anything else in the years ahead.

## Law Enforcement is United

George Mason University professors Scott Keeter and Stephen Mastrofski recently surveyed police chiefs. Nine out of ten chiefs said America could greatly reduce crime by expanding educational child care programs and after-school programs, and agreed that we'll pay more later if we don't invest now. Our 1,000 members are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But we also want to save money and lives by preventing crime. It's time to invest in what works.

Web site: [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org). Listserve, for news on policy developments and new reports.: [www.fightcrime.org/email.html](mailto:www.fightcrime.org/email.html). This report was made possible by support from the David and Lucile Packard, William T. Grant, Ford, and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundations.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS: 2000 P.St.NW, WASHINGTON DC, 20036, 202-776-0027.

#### Endnotes for the First Page:

- Children in child care:  
Blank, H., Schulman, K., Ewen, D., *Key Facts: Essential Information About Child Care, Early Education and School-Age Care*, Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C., 1999.
- Mothers of children under age six in the labor force:  
Blank, H., Schulman, K., Ewen, D., *Key Facts: Essential Information About Child Care, Early Education and School-Age Care*, Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C., 1999.
- Chicago Child-Parent Center research:  
Reynolds, A.J., et al., 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. *JAMA*, May 9, 2001.
- High/Scope Perry Preschool research:  
Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H.V., Weikart, D. P., *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*, High/Scope Press, Ypsilanti, MI, 1993.
- Large national study on child care:  
Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., et al., "The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School," FPG Child Development Center, Chapel Hill, NC, October 1999.
- NICHD data:  
Media coverage of the NICHD data was based on press releases, a press briefing, and a symposium presentation at a meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Thursday, April 19, 2001. No paper has yet been presented on these specific findings and members of the research team have challenged some of the findings as widely reported in the press, such as the implication that children who are in child care longer had above normal levels of problem behaviors or aggression compared to other children their age tested using the same behavior instrument. Unfortunately, the press also largely ignored other findings presented at the same time showing that children who had access to good quality child care centers did better on school readiness tests in kindergarten and got along better with their peers compared to those children who attended poor quality child care centers.

#### Endnotes for the Second Page:

- Tuition at a public university:  
Schulman, Karen, *The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care out of Reach for Many Families*, Children's Defense Fund, 2000.
- Tuition costs for a 4-year old in a child care center:  
Schulman, Karen, *The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care out of Reach for Many Families*, Children's Defense Fund, 2000.
- Child care teacher wages:  
Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://stats.bls.gov/oes/1999/oesrcrst.htm> [note: in some states, local surveys have been conducted and reported, but they should be similar to this national database of state-specific data].
- The Head Start and Early Head Start estimates:  
These estimates are based on 2000 figures from the Head Start Bureau of HHS for children served by state and age, compared to 1999 projected census data on children in poverty, with some additional calculations to derive age specific poverty rates, to adjust for those who attend Head Start but who are not in poverty and to remove from the formula those in HS who are 5 years old. Though we feel this is a solid approach, we did not feel the accuracy warranted presenting exact percentages, so we presented the results as 'about X in 10' or similar language. Also, in some states local surveys or calculations have been conducted and reported. Even so, we decided to use our standard approach, but we attempted to ensure that those locally reported results were not greatly different from these estimates.
- Data on Child Care and Development Block Grant coverage by state for 1999: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2000pres/20001206a.pdf>
- Rhode Island State Spending:  
This information was provided by Elizabeth Burke Bryant of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.
- Savings from the Perry Preschool program:  
Barnett, W.S., "Cost Benefit Analysis," in Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H.V., Weikart, D. P., *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27*, High/Scope Press, Ypsilanti, MI, 1993.
- Chicago Child-Parent Center savings:  
Reynolds, A.J., et al., "Alterable Predictors of Educational Attainment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study," and "Long Term Effects of Participation in the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers," Symposium Presentations at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Chicago, IL, March 30, 2000.
- Poll of Police Chiefs:  
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, "Poll of Police Chiefs conducted by George Mason University Professors Stephen D. Mastrofski and Scott Keeter," Washington, D.C., November 1, 1999. The survey was conducted by sending faxes to 855 Chiefs from a sampling including all 255 Chiefs from cities over 100,000, and a random sample of 600 Chiefs serving smaller cities. 566 Chiefs responded to the survey (66%), and the margin of error was 5%.