



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

As an organization of more than 2,500 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.

America's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the proven 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 investments leaves millions of children at needless risk of becoming violent or delinquent teens and adult criminals—and leaves every American at risk of becoming a crime victim.

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

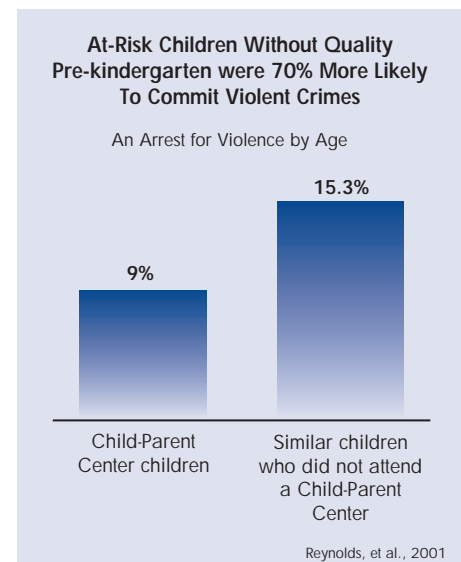
Four Steps to Dramatically Reduce School and Youth Violence

1. Provide all families access to quality pre-kindergarten 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 three- 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.

When parents are forced to leave their children in inadequate child care, all Americans pay a terrible price.



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.

Almost one million children are abused or neglected in this country each year. 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:

- 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 studies showed the coaching prevented four out of five cases of abuse and neglect. Fifteen years after the services ended, the mothers who were not in the program had three time more arrests and their children had twice as many arrests as those who participated in 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.

“America’s fight against violence must begin in the high chair, not the electric chair. Anything less leaves America’s police fighting with one hand tied behind our backs.”

– George Sweat, Director, North Carolina Office of Juvenile Justice; former police chief, Winston-Salem, NC

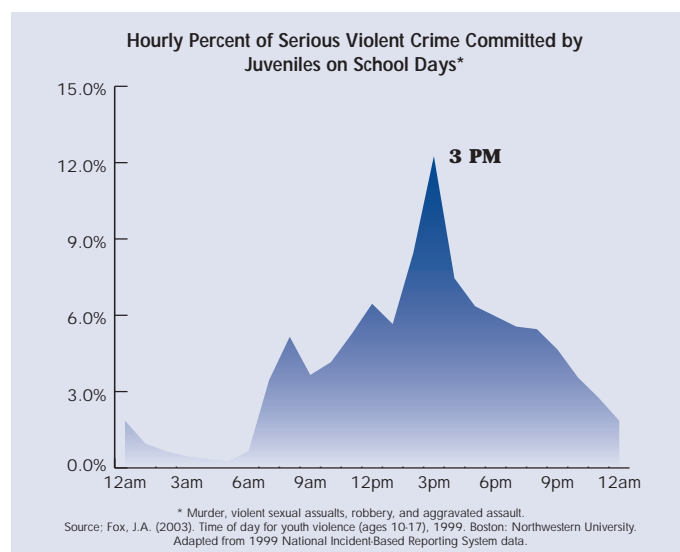
There must be a national commitment to provide child protective, foster care and adoption services with comprehensive policies and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal children who have been abused and neglected.

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 hour after the school bell rings, millions 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 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

“When the peak hours of violent juvenile crime are between the end of school and 6:00 P.M., it’s just common sense to provide the after-school programs that give kids the values and skills they need to say ‘no’ to crime and violence.”

– Sheriff Leroy Baca, Los Angeles County, CA

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.

- 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 necessary to help them avoid crime.

Children who are overly aggressive and at risk for problems later in life can be screened and identified at an early age and helped with mental health or other services.

- The Incredible Years is a program that provides training in problem solving and social issues for families of children with overly aggressive behavior problems. The researchers studying this program 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 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 behaviors have been proven to cut crime. Research shows that repeat arrests of youths in these programs have been cut by as much as half compared to the re-arrest rate of youths not receiving this help.
- Another approach, known as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), 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 our country fails to invest in children, all Americans pay far more later—not just in lost lives, but also in tax dollars. The federal treasury will actually have more money to dedicate to other uses in the future—whether for

“We could be saving thousands of lives—and sparing thousands of families unimaginable heartbreak—by investing up front in the proven early childhood care and youth development programs that can turn kids away from crime.”

– Jean Lewis, Past President, National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children

Social Security or tax cuts—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.

“We’ll win the war against crime when we’re ready to invest in America’s most vulnerable children without waiting for them to become America’s most wanted criminals.”

– Seattle Police Chief R. Gil Kerlikowske
Board Chairman, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Law Enforcement United in Calling for Crime-Prevention Investments in Kids

Who says these four steps are among our most powerful weapons to fight crime?

- The more than 2,500 law enforcement leaders and violence survivors who make up Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.
- The **International Association of Chiefs of Police**, the **Fraternal Order of Police**, the **National District Attorneys Association**, the **National Organization for Victim Assistance** and dozens of other national and state law enforcement organizations have adopted forceful calls for boosting critical crime prevention investments in children.
- In response to a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, an overwhelming 71 percent of the nation’s police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors chose providing “more educational child care programs for preschool age children and after-school programs for school-age youngsters” as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime. A poll showed that 80 percent of law enforcement leaders believe that expanding resources for child abuse prevention and foster care programs will significantly reduce youth crime and violence.

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



Launched in 1996, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a bipartisan, anti-crime organization led by more than 2,500 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It is a non-profit organization supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations, and receives no funds from federal, state, or local governments. Major funding is provided by:

The Atlantic Philanthropies • Buffett Early Childhood Fund • The California Endowment • The California Wellness Foundation • The Annie E. Casey Foundation • Marguerite Casey Foundation • Robert Sterling Clark Foundation • Freddie Mac Foundation • Garfield Foundation • Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund • The Heinz Endowments • Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation • James Irvine Foundation • JEHT Foundation • The Joyce Foundation • The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation • The David and Lucile Packard Foundation • The William Penn Foundation • The Pew Charitable Trusts—Advancing Quality Pre-K for All • Rauch Foundation • The Skillman Foundation