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**FIGHT
CRIME**



**INVEST
IN KIDS**

Quality Child Care and After-School Programs

Powerful Weapons Against Crime

A Report

from

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

February 1998

Executive Summary

Full Report is available on the
FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' web site at
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QUALITY CHILD CARE AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS: POWERFUL WEAPONS AGAINST CRIME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

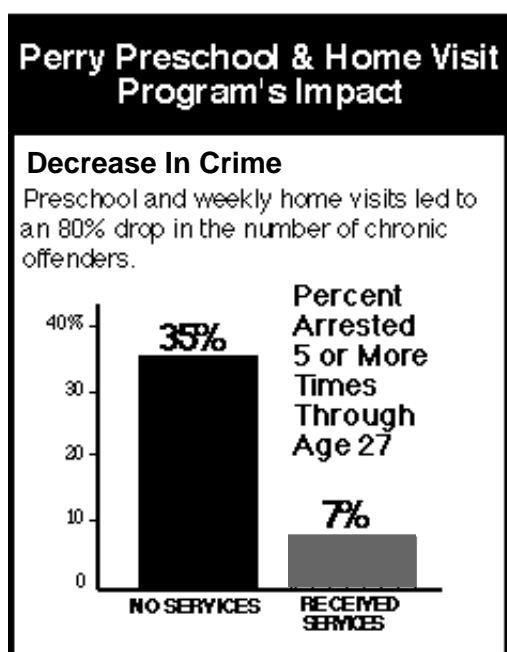
WE MUST SPARE NO EFFORT in making sure that dangerous criminals are behind bars. But that strategy by itself will never be enough to make our communities safe. Police, prosecutors, crime survivors, criminologists and child development experts all report the same conclusion: **Quality educational child care for preschool children and after-school programs for school-age kids are among the most powerful weapons in America's anti-crime arsenal.**

The time for philosophical debate about whether such investments "might work" is over. The proof is in: Good child care and after-school youth development programs for at-risk youngsters sharply reduce crime and help children develop the skills and values to become good neighbors and responsible adults instead of criminals. When we fail to invest in the proven programs that help kids get the right start, we all pay an enormous price.

It is time to cut crime's most important supply line: Its ability to turn kids into criminals.

It is time to cut crime's most important supply line: Its ability to turn America's kids into criminals.

Quality Child Development Programs: Proven to Cut Crime Dramatically



"OUR FIGHT AGAINST CRIME NEEDS TO START IN THE HIGH CHAIR, not wait for the electric chair," says Winston-Salem (NC) Chief of Police George Sweat.

He's right.

Powerful evidence from one study after another proves that quality child care in the first five years of life can greatly reduce the risk that today's babies and toddlers will become tomorrow's juvenile delinquents and criminals.

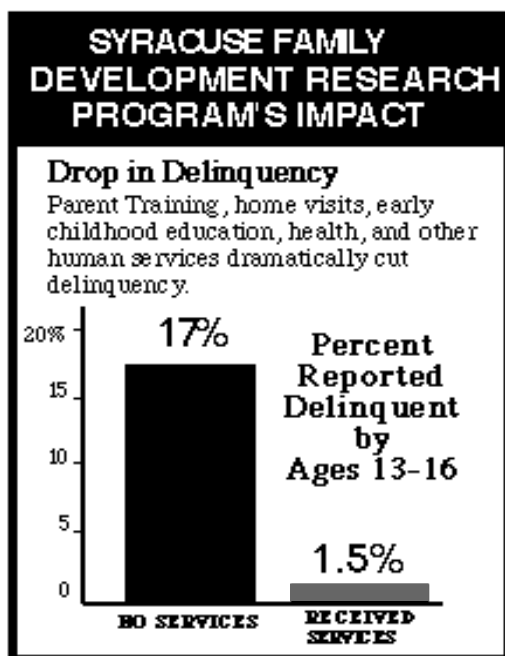
The early childhood development programs for at-risk children which have proven most effective in preventing future delinquency and crime are those which, like the Head Start program for three-and four-year-olds and the Early Head Start

"Our fight against crime needs to start in the high chair, not wait for the electric chair."

program for children younger than three, supplement educational day care with programs to involve parents and to coach and support them in child-rearing.¹ For example:

A High/Scope Foundation study at the Perry Preschool in Michigan offered at-risk three- and four-year-olds a quality Head Start-style preschool program, supplemented by weekly in-home coaching for parents. Twenty-two years later, those who had been denied the services as toddlers were *five times more likely* to be chronic lawbreakers by age 27.²

A similar program in Syracuse, providing child development and health services for at-risk infants and toddlers and parenting support for their mothers and fathers, found that kids denied the services were *ten times more likely* to be delinquent by age 16.³



ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS to provide coaching in parenting skills for at-risk parents is through home visits to those parents who want help. Home visitor programs have been proven to strikingly reduce child abuse and neglect while they improve parenting, help children develop into good neighbors, and even reduce the risk that the parent will engage in criminal activity.

Although abuse and neglect are not normally included in crime statistics, most Americans would agree that they are among the nation's most serious crimes. If we included them in our definition of serious crimes, abuse and neglect would make up nearly one-fifth of all serious crimes reported each year. Child abuse and neglect also sharply increase the risk that a child will grow up to become a criminal.⁴

The risk of abuse and neglect declines when parents have adequate knowledge of how children develop in their early years. The potential for abuse skyrockets, for example, when a parent thinks infants are supposed to be toilet-trained at six months, or doesn't understand that young children "go to pieces" when they are tired, or doesn't know that shaking a child can cause brain damage.

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Studies show that roughly half of all abuse and neglect among high-risk families might be eliminated if such parents were offered family support programs, including parenting-coaching visits to those who want them.⁵

Quality After-School Programs Build Values and Skills While they Shut Down “Prime Time for Juvenile Crime”

The peak hours for violent juvenile crime are from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

THE PEAK HOURS FOR VIOLENT JUVENILE CRIME are from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. In the hour after the school bell rings, juvenile crime suddenly *triples* and prime time for juvenile crime begins. Half of all violent juvenile crime occurs between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and *two-thirds* occurs in the nine hours between 2:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.⁶

Quality after-school, weekend and summer programs for children and youth can cut crime dramatically — by offering school-age kids a safe haven from negative influences, and providing constructive activities that teach them not only the skills they need to succeed, but also core values like responsibility, hard work, and respect and concern for others.

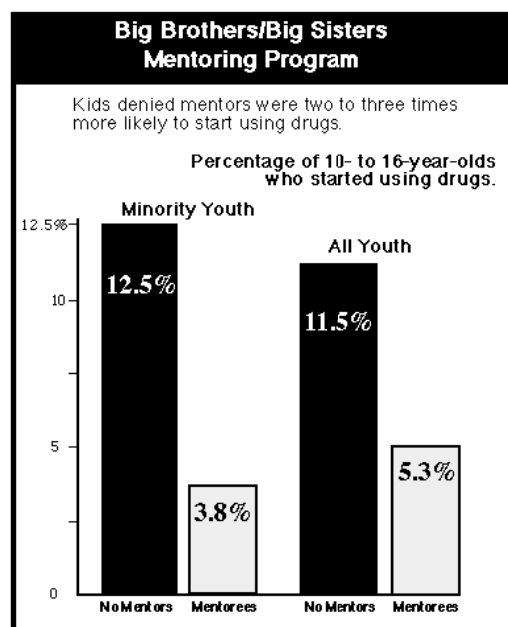
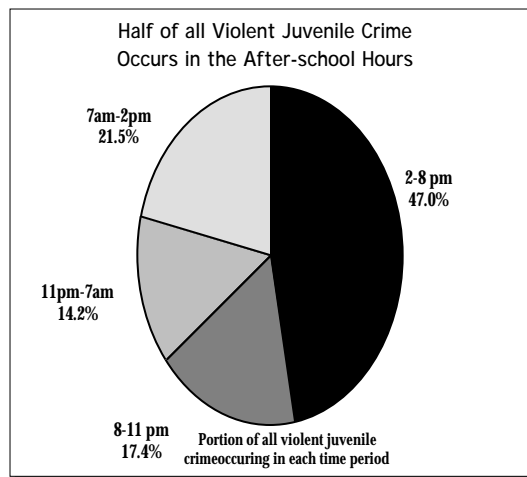
For example:

A study of juvenile arrests in a public housing project which instituted an after-school skills development program showed that the number of juvenile arrests declined by 75 percent by the end of the after school program.⁷

After the Baltimore Police opened an after-school program in a high-crime area from 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., neighborhood juvenile victimization in those hours dropped 44%.⁸

A Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters' carefully-designed mentoring program showed that young people randomly assigned to receive a trained mentor were only about half as likely to begin illegal drug use or to hit someone as those randomly assigned to the control group.⁹

Participants randomly assigned to a high school Quantum Opportunities Program of counseling, academic and life skills support, community service, and financial incentives, were less than one-quarter as likely to be convicted of a crime during the high-risk high school years as those in a control group. In other words, denying kids these services *quadrupled* the likelihood that they would be convicted of a crime while in high school. *The impact on crime was virtually immediate*, and those who participated in the program were



Denying kids these services quadrupled the likelihood that they would be convicted of a crime while in high school. The impact on crime was virtually immediate.

fifty percent more likely to graduate high school on time and two-and-a-half times more likely to attend post-secondary schooling.¹⁰ Programs like Quantum Opportunities show what can happen when after-school enrichment activities are integrated with in-school help for at-risk youngsters.

Quality school-age programs have been shown to have special importance for low-income youngsters, especially those growing up in neighborhoods where “hanging out” means being exposed to negative influences from peers and from older children and adults. These youngsters learn to be more cooperative, get along better with others resolve conflicts more amicably, read more, participate in more academically enriching activities, and improve grades and school conduct, when they are provided quality after-school programs.¹¹

As the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development observed in its seminal report on youth development programs, “risk will be transformed into opportunity” when we provide young people with the out-of-school youth development programs that can turn “their non-school hours into the time of their lives.”¹²

Child Care: A System In Crisis

OUR NATION’S CHILD CARE SYSTEM IS IN CRISIS.

As this decade began, the Committee for Economic Development, made up of executives from America’s largest corporations, declared, “The lack of availability of quality child care that is developmentally appropriate, has educational value, and is affordable has created a crisis of national proportions that affects most families but hits low-income families the hardest.”¹³

As we near the end of the decade, that crisis has escalated.

As we near the end of the decade, that crisis has worsened.

As of 1995, more than three out of five women with children younger than six, and more than three out of four women with school-age children, were working outside the home.¹⁴ Even among mothers of one-year-olds, more than half work full- or part-time.¹⁵ For many of these parents, especially those at the bottom of the income ladder, debate about whether they should work or stay home ignores reality.

With full-time work at the minimum wage bringing in about \$9,000 a year after social security taxes, many families find that they can’t possibly make ends meet and provide for their children unless both parents work outside the home. Moreover, one out of four children live with only one parent,¹⁶ and half of all children can now expect to live an average of at least five years in a single-parent family.¹⁷

In some two-parent, middle-income families, adjustments in the tax code may modestly affect parental decisions to work outside the home. But such measures are no substitute for ensuring access to quality child care in the pre-school years, and quality after-school, summer and weekend child and youth development programs for our most at-risk population — the youngsters who must be our first crime prevention priority.

the Head Start child development program for at-risk preschoolers is so underfunded it can reach just four in ten eligible kids — and usually for just half of their parents' work day, for only part of the year.

The issue for many families — and for law enforcement — is not whether parents will work. It is whether the care children receive while their parents are working will be good enough to help the kids get a good start in life, or whether it will be care that damages their development and ultimately damages the public safety.

TODAY, QUALITY CHILD CARE AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS are financially out of reach for millions of America's most at-risk children and youth. Their families — mostly young and still near the lowest earning levels of their working lives — can no more afford to pay for quality child care during these years than they could afford to pay the full cost of the education we provide through public schools.

Yet the Head Start child development program for at-risk preschoolers is so underfunded it can reach just four in ten eligible kids — and usually for just half of their parents' work day, for only part of the year. And despite all the evidence that the first three years of life are critical to brain development, programs like Early Head Start, designed for kids under three, have funds to serve only a tiny fraction of the babies and toddlers who need them.

For those of us on the front lines of the battle against crime, the once-quiet crisis in child care is now noisy, pervasive, insistent, and tragic. It screams through our police sirens rushing to yet another crime that never had to happen. It is heard in the cries of agony of thousands of crime victims and their families whose lives are needlessly lost or shattered each year. It is visible as yellow crime scene tape, body bags, and blood-stained sidewalks on the nightly news.

Meanwhile, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which assists communities in helping working families afford quality care, today can serve only one in ten of the kids who most need it. Parenting education and family resource programs, whether linked directly to child care or operating separately, can serve only a tiny fraction of the at-risk families who would benefit most. And after-school programs are largely unavailable, especially for the children who need them most.

FOR THOSE OF US ON THE FRONT LINES of the battle against crime, the once-quiet crisis in child care is now noisy, pervasive, insistent, and tragic. It screams through our police sirens rushing to yet another crime that never had to happen. It is heard in the cries of agony of thousands of crime victims and their families whose lives are needlessly lost or shattered each year. It is visible as yellow crime scene tape, body bags, and blood-stained sidewalks on the nightly news.

If we want our own families to be safe, we all have a stake in making sure that every working family has access to quality child care and after school programs.

If there is one point in the discussion of child care that no American can afford to miss, it is this: If we want our own families to be safe, we all have a stake in making sure that every working family has access to quality child care and after school programs, and that all at-risk families have access to parenting education coaching.

Make no mistake about it: *Our nation's child care crisis is a crime prevention crisis.*

THAT'S THE BAD NEWS. THE GOOD NEWS is that there is no mystery about how to solve that crisis.

Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish Policy Choices: Wasting Money and Lives

WHEN AMERICA FAILS TO INVEST IN CHILDREN, we all pay far more later — not just in lives and fear, but also in tax dollars. For example:

Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation's Perry Preschool study saved \$150,000 per participant in crime costs alone. Even after subtracting the interest that could have been earned by investing the program's funding in financial markets, the project produced a net savings of \$7.16 — including more than six dollars in crime savings — for every dollar invested.¹⁸

The High/Scope Foundation's Perry Preschool study saved \$150,000 per participant in crime costs alone.

Barnett estimates that the cost, including increased crime and welfare costs among others, of failing to provide at least two years of quality early childhood care and education to low-income children is approximately \$100,000 per child. That's a total of about \$400 billion for all poor children now under five.

A recent unpublished study prepared by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimates that each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country from \$1.7 million to \$2.3 million.¹⁹

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AS AMERICA DEBATES how to use expected budget surpluses, we should consider this reminder from the business executives of the Committee for Economic Development:

"Education is an investment, not an expense. If we can ensure that all children are born healthy and develop the skills and knowledge they need to be productive, self-

supporting adults, whatever is spent on their development and education will be returned many times over in higher productivity, incomes, and taxes and in lower costs for welfare, health care, crime, and myriad other economic and social problems.”²⁰

“When child care and after-school programs save dollars and cut crime, why shouldn’t our federal and state governments provide the funding that will enable communities to get the job done?”

“The question is not whether we can afford these programs,” says former U.S. Attorney General and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Elliot L. Richardson. “It is whether we can afford to jeopardize the safety of millions of Americans and saddle future generations with the cost of failing to make these proven investments today. When child care and after-school programs save dollars and cut crime, why shouldn’t our federal and state governments provide the funding that will enable communities to get the job done?”

An Emerging Unanimity Among Anti-Crime Leaders

THE PEOPLE FIGHTING CRIME ON THE FRONT LINES are less concerned with political ideology than with hard-nosed practical solutions. They insist on dealing with the real world as they find it, and on doing what really works to fight crime.

Everyone agrees, of course, that dangerous criminals need to be locked up. But those who work day in and day out to track down, arrest, and prosecute criminals know that this vital defense is only a stop-gap measure. In the words of Baltimore Police Commissioner Thomas C. Frazier, “Police know that we cannot just arrest our way out of the crime problem.”

“We can make ourselves and our children safer,” says Buffalo Police Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske, “by investing in child care and after-school programs for America’s most vulnerable kids, instead of waiting to spend far more — in money and lives — on those who become America’s ‘Most Wanted’ adults.”

92 percent of police chiefs nationwide agreed that “America could sharply reduce crime if government invested more in programs to help children and youth get a good start.”

It is now clear that crime fighters have reached a nearly unanimous conclusion: We need to go on the offense by investing in the child care, parenting education and after-school programs that can keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place.

A POLL OF POLICE CHIEFS conducted for FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS by Northeastern University criminologist Jack McDevitt tells the story:²¹

92 percent of police chiefs nationwide agreed that “America could sharply reduce crime if government invested more in programs to help children and youth get a good start” by “fully funding Head Start for infants and toddlers, preventing child abuse, providing parenting training for high-risk families, improving schools and providing after-school programs and mentoring.”

Nine out of ten chiefs also agreed that *“if America doesn’t pay for greater investments in programs to help children and youth now, we will all pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs.”*

When asked to pick the strategy that would be “most effective” in the long term in reducing crime and violence, the chiefs chose “increasing investment in programs that help all children and youth get a good start” *nearly four to one* over “trying more juveniles as adults” or even “hiring additional police officers.”

“IGNORING PREVENTION INVESTMENTS LEAVES US STUCK ON A TREADMILL,” says former U.S. Attorney General Richardson, “running harder and harder to put people in jail while more kids are turned into criminals about as fast as we can lock them up.”

MANY CRIME VICTIMS agree. Their tragedies have given them a deep and fundamental understanding that wait-for-the-crime approaches are too little, too late for too many Americans. The voices of crime survivors speak eloquently of the need for a comprehensive and aggressive “invest-in-kids” prevention strategy:

Crime victims’ tragedies have given them a deep and fundamental understanding that wait-for-the-crime approaches are too little too late for too many Americans.

“What happened to me didn’t have to happen. If we as a nation were investing in programs like quality child care and after-school programs, to give kids the right start, I probably wouldn’t have needed those 600 stitches and all those surgeries to repair the damage.”

— Ellen Halbert, former Vice-Chair, Texas Board of Criminal Justice.
Ms. Halbert, of Austin, was brutally raped, beaten and stabbed by an intruder in her home in 1986.

“To make America safe, we need to be as willing to guarantee our kids space in child care or an after-school program as we are to guarantee a criminal room and board in a prison cell. If we want to do more than flex our muscles and talk about crime — if we want to really keep Americans safe — we must start investing in the programs we know can steer kids down the right path.”

— Jean Lewis, President,
National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children

"We could be saving thousands of lives... by investing now in the programs proven to give kids the right start in life."

"Saying we can cure crime by building more prisons is like saying we can cure death by building more cemeteries. But we could be saving thousands of lives — and sparing thousands of families unimaginable heartbreak — by investing now in the child care and after-school programs proven to give kids the right start in life."

—Marc Klaas, President, Klaas Foundation for Children

Mr. Klaas' 12-year-old daughter Polly was kidnapped and murdered in 1993.

From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call for Action

TODAY HUNDREDS OF OUR NATION'S MOST DISTINGUISHED POLICE CHIEFS, sheriffs, prosecutors, crime victim advocates and scholars have joined in calling on all public officials to protect the public safety by adopting common sense policies to:

- Provide for all infants, toddlers and preschool children access to quality child care at a price their parents can afford.**

That means child care in which staffing levels are high enough and training good enough to assure that children receive the nurturing and stimulation they need to start school ready to succeed and to learn the concern for others and other core values which begin to develop in the first years of life. To be most effective in reducing crime, quality child care and development programs for our most at-risk families should be linked to parenting education and family support.

At the federal level, this means we should be assuring through Early Head Start or other quality programs that our most at-risk babies and toddlers receive the care they need from birth to age three. It means that we should be assuring that Head Start has enough funding to serve all the low-income children who need it, and to provide full-day, high-quality year-round care for the children of working parents. And it means sufficient increases in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grants to states so that all families will have the help they need to access quality care.

Child care in which staffing levels are high enough and training good enough. Early Head Start... Head Start... [and] sufficient increases in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grants to states.

For states, it means that more should follow the lead of states like North Carolina and Ohio, which have sharply increased their own investment in quality child care and development programs to help their children get the right start.

[States] should follow the lead of states like North Carolina and Ohio, which have sharply increased their own investment in quality child care and development programs, and of states like Missouri and Hawaii, [which] have led the way in showing that they can implement large-scale, effective, parenting education and family resource programs.

- **Strengthen families and reduce child abuse, neglect and delinquency by offering all parents (at their option) “parenting coaches” through proven home visiting programs, as well as access to community-based family resource programs.**

States like Missouri and Hawaii have led the way in showing that they can implement large-scale, effective, parenting education and family resource programs, including coaching by home visitors for those who want them, without intruding on family privacy. And the plain fact is, many parents desperately need — and want — more knowledge about normal child development and coaching in parenting skills.

When at-risk parents who want to learn more about parenting — including many young parents who may never have seen healthy parenting in their own homes — are denied that help, their children and all of us are endangered.

- **Provide for all of America’s school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend and summer programs that offer recreation, academic support and community service experience.**

Neither the risk that children will go astray, nor the opportunity to help them realize their potential to become good neighbors and responsible adults, ends when they start school. Early childhood programs must be followed by school-age child care and child and youth development programs. Of course, the after-school options needed for a first-grader, an eighth-grader, and a high school junior differ markedly from one another. But all our youngsters, and especially those in low-income or high-crime areas who are

All of our youngsters, especially those in low-income or high-crime areas who are most at risk of delinquency or of becoming crime victims, need access to programs that can help them develop the skills and values they need to succeed as adults.

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For the federal government, that will require a major increase in a commitment currently so small that it barely begins to be noticed. For states and localities, it may mean implementing programs like New York City’s Beacon schools, through which community groups provide after-school programs in coordination with schools. Other states and localities may choose models which enable children and teens to access the services of community organizations off the school premises — models like the Schools of the 21st Century, sometimes called Family

Resource Centers, now in over 500 schools in 17 states, which use public schools as the hub of a network of services, such as parenting education, full-day, high-quality care for 3-5 year-olds, and child care before and after school and during summer vacations.²²

Conclusion

TAKEN AS A WHOLE, OUR FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS are falling far short of the investment in child care, parenting-education, and after-school programs needed to meet their responsibility to protect the public safety. That shortfall is part of a gaping crime prevention deficit that jeopardizes the safety of every American.

No responsibility of federal and state government is more fundamental than protecting the public safety.

It is time that leaders at the state and federal level laid out a plan to eliminate that deficit.

We all know that the actual delivery of services like child care and after-school programs must take place not in our legislatures but in our communities, through partnerships of parents, federal, state and local government, and community organizations. But no responsibility of federal and state government is more fundamental than protecting the public safety.

That responsibility simply cannot be met without providing communities with the resources to assure that all families, and especially those whose children are most at risk of going astray, have access to quality child care, parenting-education, and after-school programs at a price they can afford.

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Sanford A. Newman, President
FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

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