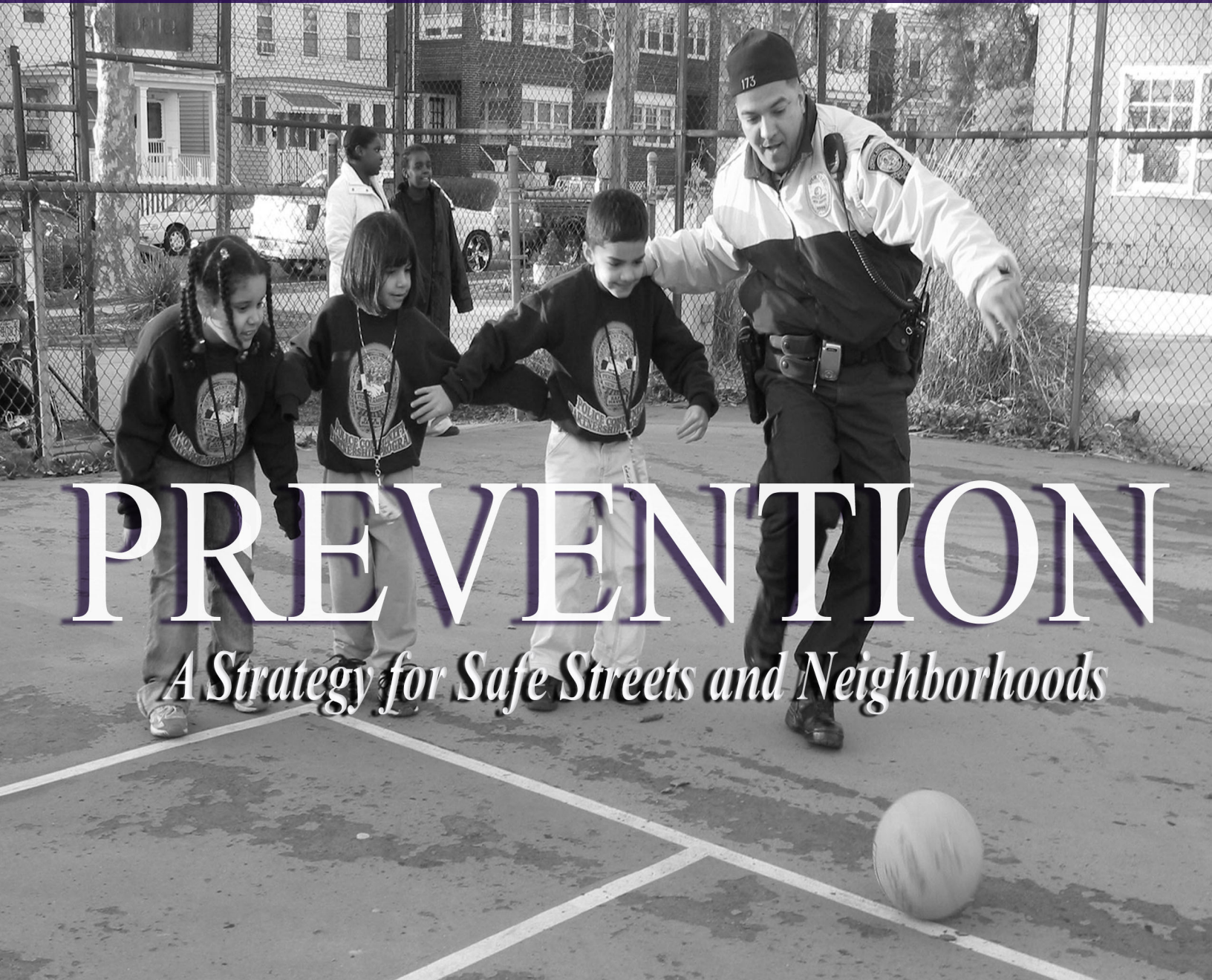




The State of New Jersey



PREVENTION

A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods

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Governor

INTRODUCTION

The Prevention Plan (Prevention Plan) component of the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods responds to recent increases in violent crime committed by juveniles, and the growing influence of street gangs in New Jersey. The State took an in-depth view to develop a statewide strategy to prevent at-risk youth from becoming involved in delinquency, gang activity, and gun violence in the first instance, and for early intervention when youth first contact the juvenile justice system. The initial fact finding included data collection and analyses of crime, delinquency and gangs in New Jersey, socioeconomic and behavioral characteristics that are correlates of problem behavior, and the State resources available to prevent and intervene in crime and delinquency. This analysis created a framework for the Prevention Plan.

Crime statistics show that while crime decreased overall between 2000 and 2005, statewide juvenile arrests for murder, robbery and weapons offenses increased by 15%, 22.4%, and 16.4%, respectively. While youth violence is an issue across the State, a small number of communities are disproportionately affected by juvenile crime and violence. Based on currently available data, the twenty cities¹ most affected by increases in youth crime represent 19.6% of the State's population,² but account for 70% of juvenile arrests for murder, 53.6% of arrests for robbery, 34.9% of arrests for weapons offenses, 64% of Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) admissions, and 81% of gang related homicides.³

The increase in juvenile arrests for violent crimes goes hand in hand with the increase in perceived gang activity experienced in New Jersey in recent years. The 2007 New Jersey State Police Gang Survey, a self-reporting survey of all municipal police departments, found 43% of municipalities reported a "presence of street gangs" in their jurisdiction.⁴ These municipalities represent 69% of New Jersey's population, and include major urban areas, as well as suburban and rural municipalities.

It is not surprising that the youth in the twenty major cities may be more likely than others to face a greater number of risk factors, including poverty, single-headed households, teen births, and low academic performance, that are correlates to problem behavior and delinquent activity. The twenty cities make up 21.5% of the child population, and 27% of children living in poverty. Median income in these cities is \$31,688 compared to \$65,282 for the State. These cities also experience higher unemployment rates (8% vs 5% statewide), significantly more households headed by a single parent (47% vs 22%, statewide), and a higher incidence of child abuse and neglect referrals (3.4% vs 2% statewide). These twenty cities also make up 74.4% of statewide births to teens ages 10-14, and 43.7% of the State's infant mortality. Academic achievement for youth in these cities is significantly lower than statewide. For example, the percent of youth passing 8th grade language arts, math and science are all under 50% in the cities, while the statewide percent passing are 72%, 62% and 77% respectively. Low academic performance has led to a disparity in graduation rates between these cities and the statewide rate. For the 2004/2005 school year, statewide graduation rates were 84% while for the twenty major cities it was 66%. A significantly greater proportion of the population in these twenty cities is Black or Hispanic (71.6% combined) than statewide (26.2% combined).⁵

Faced with these disturbing crime statistics and trends, the State recognizes that law enforcement is only one part of a strategy to fight crime, and that stemming the tide of youth involvement with guns, gangs and delinquency is equally important to ensuring public safety and promoting a healthy society. This plan seeks to provide a statewide vision for delinquency prevention and tools for state agencies, local governments, and communities to help realize that vision.

COORDINATING EFFORTS

State and national experts agree that the most effective delinquency and crime prevention strategies seek to reduce the influence of environmental and community characteristics scientifically shown to be highly correlated to crime, and at the same time increase the impact of protective factors that build resiliency and mitigate against the impact of these risk factors.

Delinquency prevention should therefore be a multi-pronged endeavor that should reach beyond any one state department or division in government. It should incorporate a wide array of sometimes seemingly unrelated public policy efforts that collectively contribute to the “bottom line” of less crime and enhanced public safety. Public policy efforts to improve schools, reduce substance abuse, child abuse and neglect and teen pregnancy, strengthen families and communities, address mental health problems, improve job readiness and provide greater job opportunities, can all make significant contributions to a comprehensive primary delinquency prevention strategy.

Best practice in delinquency prevention shows that, at both the state and local levels, the many agencies and groups tasked with funding prevention programs must take a more coordinated and collaborative approach to funding them. At the local level, coordinated efforts in this area center around parents, families, schools and communities developing clearly stated policies and expectations for young people’s behavior. Healthy beliefs and clear standards, communicated consistently by the significant individuals and social groups to whom the youth are bonded, build a web of protection for young people exposed to risk.⁶

Over the past ten months, Department of Law and Public Safety staff met with representatives from state and local agencies, community-based service providers and other stakeholders to understand existing prevention efforts in the State. That endeavor revealed that the State is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on programs that may be used to prevent youth crime by impacting on its correlates.

But while many state agencies are funding “prevention” programs, communication among state agencies is not institutionalized, and thus, statewide coordination of programs and service delivery is non-existent. The State also needs to better leverage the large national-level literature and evidence-based models of delinquency prevention and intervention programming to help guide decisions to fund the most effective prevention programs and services and to target the greatest number of youth at risk. This coordinated strategy must include oversight, established and measurable goals and objectives, and reporting requirements and successful tracking of service delivery, costs and expected outcomes.

Over time, improving how prevention programs track service delivery, outcomes and costs, will permit the State to conduct cost-benefit analyses that will provide critical information to public and private funding sources on how to allocate limited resources to the most successful and cost effective programs to reduce youth delinquency and problem behavior.

To provide support to municipalities interested in implementing the prevention strategies in this plan, the State will prioritize over \$36 million dollars of existing funding to the “Collaborative Community Prevention Program” (CCPP). The CCPP is a central pillar of the Prevention Plan, in that it is the main funding mechanism for the plan and the means by which the State will ensure that resources are allocated effectively.

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Under the CCPP, ten state agencies will make prevention program funding available to counties, municipalities and agencies through a series of Notices of Availability of Funds. These Notices represent an unprecedented collaboration among the state-level agencies to harness the resources of the State to prevent and intervene in delinquency by re-prioritizing existing funds. Announcing the Notices jointly as part of the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods facilitates notification to communities of the wide array of grants that will be available. Based on available data, the Prevention Plan will focus resources in municipalities with the greatest crime problems. However, any municipality with a demonstrated problem and a willingness to implement the prevention strategies will be eligible to apply for funding under most circumstances.

INVESTING IN PREVENTION EFFORTS MAKES POLICY AND ECONOMIC SENSE

Delinquency prevention is a critical component of the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods because it is a more effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars than waiting until youth have begun to offend, or delaying concerted system responses until juveniles have been arrested repeatedly or commit very serious offenses.⁷

For example, research has shown that educational attainment and access to market-rate jobs decrease crime and delinquency. A 2001 report issued by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice found that school dropouts are three and a half times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that, for New Jersey, the impact of a five percent increase in male high school graduation rates would save the State \$120,008,948 in crime related costs, with additional annual earnings of \$69,283,091, for a total benefit to the state economy of \$189,292,039.⁸ And a recent Justice Policy Institute brief found that for every one percent increase in civilian labor force participation, violent crime is expected to decrease by 8.8 incidents per 100,000 people.⁹

Finally, research studies consistently show that youth development programs that enhance decision-making skills or parent-child relations, diversion interventions and family therapies, home visitation programs and quality pre-school education, quality after-school programs, and other primary prevention programs can divert youth from delinquent activity, protect children and adults from violent crime, and provide positive returns on investment.¹⁰ In this regard, the State is encouraged by data unveiled in September 2007, by the U.S. Department of Education from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which showed that 4th grade readers in New Jersey are among the best readers in the nation. The NAEP scores also showed dramatic improvements in closing the achievement gap in New Jersey. For 4th grade reading, Black students' scores increased by 12 points from 2003 to 2007, and the gap between Black and White students decreased by 10 points. This was one of the largest reductions in the achievement gap in the nation. For 4th grade math, the gap between Black and White students decreased by seven points over the same period, which was also one of the largest decreases in the nation. Black students' scores increased 15 points, the largest such increase in the nation. There were also increases in test scores for Hispanic students in 4th grade reading.

These results are very promising. In particular, gains in reading scores appear to be indicative of the State's commitment to early childhood programs and an emphasis on literacy for the younger grades. The results, however, also show that there is a significant amount of work to be done to close the achievement gap and to improve educational outcomes for middle and high school students.

PREVENTION GOALS AND FRAMEWORK

Risk and Protective Factors

The prevention strategy is firmly grounded in a scientifically-based proactive public health model, the *risk and protective factor framework*, that is advanced by national experts in the field of delinquency prevention as well as by the largest funders of delinquency prevention, including the federal government.¹¹ This approach focuses on identifying points of intervention that can reduce risk factors that are statistically correlated to problem behavior and delinquency and that can increase protective factors and resiliency against problem behavior.

Risk factors are defined as personal characteristics or environmental conditions scientifically found to increase the likelihood of problem behavior in youth. They include factors such as living in a high-crime neighborhood, living in a disadvantaged neighborhood (high unemployment, low median income, high percentage of families on TANF, high percent of children without health insurance, etc.), antisocial behavior, gun possession, teen parenthood, favorable attitudes toward drugs, early onset of drug use, mental health disorders, emotional disorders, early sexual involvement, exposure to violence, poor family attachment, parent with low level of education or illiteracy, domestic violence, family history of criminal or delinquent behavior, low academic achievement, truancy or frequent absences, suspension, dropping out of school, peers engaged in problem behaviors, gang presence in neighborhood, peer rejection, low community achievement, and social disorganization in the community.

Conversely, protective factors are personal and environmental characteristics that increase youth's resiliency, or ability overcome stressful life events and promote competence, and that have been scientifically established to reduce the likelihood of problem behavior. Protective factors include a positive/resilient temperament, social competency and problem solving skills, involvement in a religious community, perception of adult support, healthy sense of self, high expectations for self, good relationship with parents, positive attitudes toward school, academic achievement (reading and mathematics skills), quality schools, involvement with positive peer group activities, good relationship with peers, economically sustainable communities, neighborhood cohesion, safe neighborhoods.

The framework suggests that the more risk factors present in a youth's life, the greater the likelihood of problem behaviors, but also that the negative impact of problem behaviors can be mitigated by the presence of certain protective factors. Delinquency prevention strategies under this framework intervene in the risk factors that can be influenced and boost the protective factors.

Goals

The primary goal of the Prevention Plan is to reduce youth delinquency, gang involvement and gun violence in New Jersey's cities, by partnering with local government and communities to reduce the impact of risk factors on youth, while increasing the protective factors that lead to productive and delinquency-free adolescence and crime-free adulthood.

Programmatic goals to achieve that result include: better coordination of prevention services across State agencies and among State and local providers, the increased use of baseline community assessments to inform prevention program planning, improved reporting and tracking of costs, services

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delivered, and outcomes for all prevention programs, the increased use of evidence-based programs that reduce risk factors and increase protective factors, and beginning to routinely use the improved data collection efforts to conduct cost-benefit analyses to target resources to the most cost-effective and successful programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Department of Law and Public Safety conducted a strategic analysis of current prevention programming and best practices that generated guiding principles for the Prevention Plan. These principles represent a unique approach in that they acknowledge that delinquency prevention and intervention are a collective responsibility, transcending state and local agencies, and cutting across counties and across levels of government and local communities. This plan sets forth a vision for New Jersey crime prevention and develops policy strategies and recommendations for state, county and municipal governments that further the goal of reducing crime, with an emphasis on reducing delinquency and gang involvement.

The Prevention Plan takes its vision a step further and identifies mechanisms for implementation, and establishes a structure within and across state and local governments for achieving the prevention goals. These guiding principles increase accountability for all state, county and local agencies charged with crime prevention and intervention through data-driven, action-oriented, and outcomes-based processes:

Multi-Level Collaboration

Because the justice system is comprised of agencies at all levels of government, crime reduction through primary prevention strategies necessarily involves a partnership among state, county and municipal governments. Leadership, oversight, coordination and collaboration are key components. Among levels of government, information needs to flow from top down (state to local), and from bottom up (local to state). Within each level of government, information also needs to flow across agencies and key actors.

Community Empowerment

Much of the work to prevent and intervene in delinquency is implemented at the local level. Consequently, any serious approach must integrate the role of communities. To prevent delinquency and gang involvement, communities must be empowered to be active participants in developing strategies to address these problems.

Solutions-Oriented Use of Data

Additionally, like businesses, the most effective government systems are those that rely on data to identify problems and develop solutions. The initiative will encourage critical self-analyses at the local level, using data to examine the specific nature of the local crime problem as well as current justice system policy and practice as it relates to crime reduction. The State will work to provide support to local communities that choose to conduct these analyses. These analyses empower government and communities with the ability to accurately identify and prioritize site-specific crime issues, tailor prevention strategies to these issues, and track program costs and benefits to ensure that existing resources are allocated more efficiently.

Accountability and Transparency

Core values of the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods are accountability and transparency in government. From this perspective, the plan seeks to build accountability to the process of awarding public funds through the use of Notices of Availability of Funds that will require compliance with reporting and evaluation requirements and will encourage use of evidence-based programs. The overall prevention initiative also will be evaluated through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. This information will begin to provide data on successful and cost effective initiatives. By providing this information to New Jersey citizens, practitioners, and to other interested groups, government transparency will be achieved and state policy makers will be more educated on which programs work best and therefore deserve the State's limited resources.

Replication of Best Practice Models

The Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods recognizes the existence of best practice models in the area of delinquency prevention. The Plan provides information and resources to educate policy makers and practitioners about evidence-based programs, their outcomes and economic benefits, and encourages their replication whenever appropriate and practicable.

Ancillary Benefits

In developing the strategy, the State is interested in making more resources available for delinquency prevention following a coordinated and accountable evidence-based strategy to reduce delinquency and crime and that will also generate ancillary benefits. Some of these benefits include increasing juvenile justice system responsiveness, increasing juvenile accountability, decreasing costs of juvenile corrections, and increasing juvenile justice system program effectiveness. New Jersey's communities will also be safer places to live, work and raise children. And because safer, family-friendly communities spawn economic growth, this initiative also supports the Governor's commitment to "sustaining New Jersey's position as one of the nation's most prosperous states."

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

State-level Coordination and Support Strategies

At least ten state agencies fund prevention and intervention efforts through grants. Each state agency awards money to communities through an individual grant-award process, with very little, if any coordination among agencies. A lack of an overall delinquency prevention strategy and the lack of a mechanism for sharing and coordinating the State's response to crime and delinquency have created a fragmented, complex system of programs and services. Though many state agencies engaged in delinquency prevention and intervention efforts are doing good work, this lack of coordination and information sharing has resulted in duplication of services, concentrations of services in some areas, while not enough in others, and an inability to gauge, at the state level, how successful these efforts are in preventing and reducing delinquency and crime.

The Prevention Plan makes state-level funding available to municipalities to address these weaknesses in the current structure and to implement a coordinated and effective delinquency prevention strategy statewide.

Prevention Strategy Number 1:

Prioritize over \$36 Million in Existing State Resources for State-level Coordination and Support for State and Local Crime Prevention/Intervention Strategies Prioritize \$20 Million in Existing State Resources for State-level Coordination and Support for State and Local Crime Prevention/Intervention Strategies

To provide support to localities that choose to implement the recommendations found in this strategic plan, the State will prioritize existing funding to issue a series of Notices of Availability of Funds for prevention programming. Ten state agencies will participate and will make available a total of over \$36 million in grant funding over the course of the year to counties, municipalities, and other agencies to implement aspects of the Prevention Plan. These Notices will be announced jointly, and represent an unprecedented collaboration among the state-level agencies to harness the State's existing resources to prevent and intervene in delinquency by redirecting and coordinating available funds before seeking additional funding.

Funding under the Collaborative Community Crime Prevention Program will support the wide range of crime prevention/intervention programs encompassed in the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods including, but not limited to:

- Planning/Community Assessment Grants
- After School / Aftercare Gang Prevention Outreach
- Truancy Abatement
- Job training/Coaching
- Summer Youth Employment/Internships
- Alternative Education Programs
- Comprehensive Family Initiatives
- Mentoring
- Model Delinquency Prevention Programs
- Stationhouse Adjustment Programs
- Police/Probation/Parole Partnerships for Court-Involved Youth
- Municipal Crime Data Analysis
- Law Enforcement/Youth Initiatives and Revitalization Projects.

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Participating state agencies include: Department of Agriculture, Department of Children and Families, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Law and Public Safety (Division of Criminal Justice), Department of Law and Public Safety (Juvenile Justice Commission), Secretary of State's Office, and the Department of Transportation.

Each of the Notices under the Collaborative Community Crime Prevention Program will require counties, municipalities and agencies to document the needs assessment and planning process that was utilized to determine and select each program to be funded. The strategy recommends that municipalities establish local planning bodies with strong leadership from local government and made up of multi-disciplinary groups that include county, municipal and community stakeholders. Planning grants will support these efforts.

Prevention Strategy Number 2:

Create a Prevention Coordinating Council and Appoint a Prevention Coordinator to set the overall direction and measure progress on the plan's goals.

The Attorney General will establish a Prevention Coordinating Council (Council) and will appoint a Prevention Coordinator as its chair. The Prevention Coordinator, supported by the Council, will oversee the day-to-day implementation of the Prevention Plan and will develop and implement evaluation mechanisms to monitor progress and identify any weaknesses that may be evident with respect to particular strategies.

The Council will report directly to the Attorney General and will provide the Governor's Oversight Committee with an annual report on the status of its implementation and evaluation efforts.

Recognizing the importance of statewide collaboration and coordination to the success of the Prevention Plan, the Council will be charged with ensuring that information critical to the initiatives is shared among state departments, agencies and with local governments and public stakeholders. To that end, the Council will work to eliminate any obstacles that may currently impede the ability of the departments, agencies, local governments and the public to collaborate on the prevention strategies set forth in the Prevention Plan.

The Council will engage state agencies in developing and implementing a collective vision of efficient and effective prevention program funding for New Jersey. The Council will consist of members appointed by the Attorney General and will draw on the expertise of the following lead agencies and departments in this area: The Juvenile Justice Commission; the Department of Children and Families; the Department of Education; the Department of Human Services; and, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The Council will form working groups as necessary, develop best practices for implementation and evaluation of prevention goals, and work with other state departments and agencies, as well as local governments and public stakeholders to achieve its objectives. The Council will also study whether and how prevention and intervention efforts can help address disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system.

Prevention Strategy Number 3:

The Office of the Attorney General will create a Delinquency Prevention Funding Guide for State Agencies and Will Oversee the Work of a Prevention Grant Coordinating Sub-Committee.

In an effort to ensure that all state agencies are working from the same set of delinquency prevention principles and best practices, the Office of the Attorney General will create a Funding Guide for state agencies. The funding guide will include information on the principles of funding effective primary delinquency prevention programs, risk and protective factors, model delinquency/gang prevention and intervention programs, and performance measures. The State's Prevention Coordinating Council will use information contained in the funding guide as the basis for creating a statewide vision for delinquency prevention. This vision will include targeting funding to particular risk and protective factors, as well as potentially targeting funding to jurisdictions working to reduce risk factors while increasing protective factors. This collaborative work will provide increased opportunities to reduce delinquency and gang membership statewide.

As part of the Prevention Coordinating Council, the Governor has created a Prevention Grant Coordination Sub-committee made up of representatives of key state agencies that are stakeholders in delinquency prevention and intervention. The Grant Coordination Sub-committee will be appointed by the Delinquency Prevention Coordinator, through the Attorney General's Office. Membership on the group will minimally consist of grant representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Law and Public Safety, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Community Affairs, the Office of the Secretary of State, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Department of Higher Education.

Sub-Committee members will be expected to share information regularly on current and future delinquency prevention and intervention programming efforts and grant applications and awards. Members will share information on the type of funding, proposed use and targeting of funding, and process and outcome evaluation information. This mechanism is expected to reduce duplication of efforts and leverage learning and synergies across agencies.

Local Level Planning, Implementation and Support Strategies

Much, if not all, of the national work in preventing and intervening in delinquency and crime is implemented at the local level. The Prevention Plan also recognizes that, to be successful, prevention and intervention strategies should be implemented at the county and municipal levels. Leadership at the municipal level must be identified and commitments to the Prevention Plan must be established. Counties are most familiar with their municipalities and have the overall structure and resources to help support municipalities in their crime prevention and intervention efforts.

The following strategies set forth a framework to establish linkages between the state, county and municipal governments that increase the collective ability to prevent and intervene in delinquency, and provide support to counties and municipalities interested in engaging in reducing and preventing crime.

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Prevention Strategy Number 4:

The State Will Support and Encourage Municipalities to Establish Local Planning Entities as Mechanisms to Develop and Implement Community Risk/Needs Assessments and Delinquency/Gang Prevention Programming

New Jersey has taken a unique approach to empowering local communities to prevent and intervene in crime by establishing twenty-one County Youth Services Commissions (CYSCs) as the local planning bodies for delinquency prevention and intervention efforts.¹² CYSCs are statutorily required to create a continuum of programs and services that are used by police, schools, families and primarily the courts to prevent or correct delinquent behavior.

CYSCs bring together local stakeholders but focus on countywide programming and service provision, leaving a gap in municipal planning.¹³ Several counties and cities have filled this gap through Municipal Youth Services Commissions (MYSCs)¹⁴ that comprise members of municipal and county government, municipal court, schools, youth investment councils, workforce investment boards, service providers, the business community, community leaders, and youth and families. MYSCs serve as the mechanism for municipal community assessment, planning and advocacy.

Expanding the number of MYSCs or replicating that model statewide can fill gaps in municipal planning and create a blueprint for delinquency prevention and intervention programs that apply the risk and protective factor framework at the grass-roots level. Services and information will be more readily accessed by residents, thereby empowering communities to be active partners in prevention efforts. The State specifically encourages local planning bodies to conduct outreach efforts to engage parents and family as often as possible in prevention strategies and programming for at-risk youth.

For efficiency, local governing bodies may seek to broaden the role and membership of the Municipal Alliances to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (Municipal Alliances) to address youth violence, gangs and crime. Municipal Alliances use a risk/protective factor framework and their membership is mostly made up of the same stakeholders as the MYSC model.

Assuming a local planning organization is established, the key to creating a comprehensive municipal blueprint for delinquency prevention and intervention is the *community assessment process*. Like all primary delinquency prevention strategies, community assessments require that municipalities understand the risk and protective factors that exist in their communities and that they implement strategies to strengthen existing protective factors while reducing the impact of risk factors on youth and families. The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), provides several community assessment models as tools for municipalities. Each of the models requires communities to 1) establish a planning group to guide and complete the assessment; 2) assess their communities through an evaluation of risk and protective factors that currently exist in each municipality and gaps in these areas; 3) identify problem areas and solution strategies; 4) implement solution strategies; and 5) establish the effectiveness of implemented strategies on the identified problems. The OJJDP provides training on these strategies that include on-line strategic planning tools and technical assistance.

The Funding Guide and the Resource Tool-kit (discussed below) will include information on OJJDP's community assessment tools.

Prevention Strategy Number 5:

The State will provide local communities with a Community Resource Tool-kit that Includes Information on Available State Funding, Programs and Collaborations, Model/Evidence-based Programs and State Level Contacts that Can Provide Information on Specific Programs and Grants.

The safety of a neighborhood is an important indicator of a community's overall economic and social health. Neighborhood safety is not only about preventing crime but is also about ensuring that communities have access to resources and services. As part of the Prevention Plan the State developed various strategic tools that local communities can use to decrease community risk factors and increase community protective factors.

The Community Resource Tool-kit is a guide to assist individuals or groups in identifying a public safety problem and developing and implementing local crime prevention strategies. This Tool-kit provides information on local, state, and federal programs and funding, community mobilization, coalition building, public and private funding sources, examples of evidence-based delinquency prevention programs and contact information for county and state programs and resources. The Community Resource Tool-kit should be used as a guide to empower local communities to become better organized, healthier and safer.

The Tool-Kit will be available on the Law and Public Safety website at www.nj.gov/oag.

Prevention Strategy Number 6:

The State will provide support to local communities through the County Prosecutor's Office by expanding the Community Justice Program.

The State will provide funding for a minimum of 12 Community Justice Coordinators. Working through the County Prosecutor's Office, Community Justice Coordinators help develop, implement and evaluate crime, delinquency and prevention strategies. Community Justice Coordinators serve as the bridge between law enforcement and the community to identify problems, coordinate resources and plan solutions. Specifically, Community Justice Coordinators will:

- Review and analyze local crime and delinquency data.
- Share information and work with local planning organizations and communities to address their needs and support local implementation of prevention/intervention strategies.
- Work with local planning organizations to conduct community forums and with advisory boards to solicit input on crime and delinquency in neighborhoods and to mobilize communities for grass-roots prevention efforts.
- Provide support to the State and communities in assessing the progress of local crime strategy implementation through qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

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Prevention Strategy Number 7:

The Juvenile Justice Commission will Partner with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to Pilot Crime and Resource Mapping through the SMART System to be used as a Community Resource in Local Delinquency Prevention Planning Efforts.

The OJJDP, in cooperation with other federal agencies and partners has developed the Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) system. SMART is a geographic information system (GIS) and Web-based mapping application that illustrates 1) specific geographic areas of crime and delinquency, and 2) the nearby governmental and community resources that are available to prevent and control it. The system helps decision-makers at the federal, state, and local levels target areas of greatest need and allocate resources accordingly.

SMART also generates tables and graphs to illustrate a wealth of data on socioeconomic factors such as housing, population, crime, health, mortality and other data on the status of children in the United States.

Through a partnership with the Juvenile Justice Commission, OJJDP will implement a pilot SMART mapping in one municipality currently engaged in community assessment work. This pilot will enable state-level juvenile justice program administrators and key local leaders to more effectively target grants and needed programs by pinpointing areas of high juvenile crime and delinquency and viewing existing resources in that community.

The SMART system can also provide support to multi-jurisdictional gang task forces by quickly producing a map displaying the locations of known gang members by entering their home addresses and names into a list. SMART can also help task force relate the gang member locations to various risk factors. And grant writers can use SMART maps to make the case for needed resources, since the maps can pinpoint areas of high crime and show whether and to what extent federal and local resources are available in those areas. Finally, the general public can use SMART to find neighborhood-specific information on socioeconomic characteristics, and available programs and resources for youth.

Prevention Strategy Number 8:

The State will provide assistance to enhance Family Success Centers as Community-based Hubs of Services and an Information Clearinghouse for Families in Need.

In July 2007, the Department of Children and Families announced \$4 million in grant awards to twenty agencies across the State to expand or create neighborhood-based Family Success Centers. The programs aim to prevent child abuse and neglect by providing families with convenient access to a wide array of resources that can help them keep children safe. The Centers are designed to strengthen families and empower parents and guardians to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to raise healthy and happy children.

Recognizing the important role of parents and families in protecting youth and to help address the fragmented local service system for delinquency prevention and intervention, the State will enhance the Family Success Centers to include a broader range of services for children and families. The Centers, in conjunction with pre-existing departmental services and programs (e.g., Youth One-stop Career Centers, Workforce Investment Board Youth Investment Councils, and School-based Youth Services) will provide support information and referrals to a multitude of services designed to prevent delinquency or intervene as early as possible with youth and families in need.

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The Atlantic County Children and Families Initiative (CFI) is an excellent example of this concept. Atlantic County implemented the CFI after a community assessment identified a cumbersome and fragmented service delivery system as a primary cause for the county's standing on the Kids Count, a measure of children's well being. A hallmark of the program is its collaborative approach to better utilize a broad range of existing services and to make them more easily accessible to the community. Case management is a key tool used under the CFI model to assist families to resolve their problems. Comprehensive services are provided using a client-friendly approach and programs are geared toward problems identified through community assessments. Within the CFI model, Local Citizen Advisory Boards work with the Family Centers to identify community needs and plan services. Centers are located where families can most easily access them, in schools, storefronts and community service centers. Since its inception in 1993 CFI has served over 70,000 individuals from over 55,000 families and has been an important contributor to Atlantic County's gains in decreasing child poverty and increasing child wellness.

Prevention Strategy Number 9:

The State will Develop and Implement an Evidence-Based Truancy Reduction Pilot Program.

Truancy is a risk factor for a range of problems, including delinquency, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and attempts, weapon related violence, early sexual intercourse, drinking/drinking and driving, teen pregnancy, and school dropout. These relationships are circular in that truancy can be both a cause and a consequence of any of these troubling behaviors.

Data from the Rochester Youth Study show a startling relationship between self-reports of truancy and delinquency. Students who report skipping occasional classes are four times more likely than non-skippers to report having committed a serious assault, almost five times more likely to report having committed a serious property crime and twice as likely to have been arrested. Chronic truants are 12 times more likely to report having committed a serious assault, 21 times more likely to report having committed a serious property crime and almost seven times more likely to have been arrested than non-skippers. In addition, though the information is limited, there also seems to be a link between truancy and adult criminal behavior, as chronic truancy clearly leads to high school dropout and dropouts are greatly over-represented among prison and jail inmates.¹⁵

At the same time, an overwhelming proportion of truant youth face a multitude of problems in their lives that challenge their ability to attend school, including poor relations with teachers, inappropriate academic placement and ineffective and inconsistently applied attendance policies, homelessness, poverty, single-parent families, large family size and transportation difficulties, elevated levels of family conflict, and ineffective parental disciplinary practices, including inconsistency, both extremes of over-protectiveness, neglect and rejection. Personal factors include poor self-esteem, feelings of academic incompetence, poor relationships with other student, and gang involvement.¹⁶

The New Jersey Department of Education will partner with the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Department of Children and Families and the Secretary of State's Office to design a county-based Truancy Diversion Project. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the department will assist one or more of these agencies in the implementation of a pilot program. The pilot program will support county-based planning for a continuum of early intervention activities for reducing the number of truancy cases that are brought to the courts and effectively resolving those cases that are brought to court.

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The pilot sites will bring together, at a minimum, representatives of Youth Services Commissions, Family Crisis Intervention Units, the Department of Children and Families and County Superintendents of schools to develop local plans that will facilitate and coordinate the intervention responsibilities of the schools. Family Crisis Intervention Units and other agencies will identify and address the needs of students with continued absences and will provide them with necessary support services. The criteria for the design and implementation of the project are in development.

In addition, OJJDP has studied the effectiveness of five truancy prevention programs: CASASTART, Chronic Truancy Initiative, Social Decision Making/Problem Solving, Truant Recovery Program, and Across Ages. The State and local communities should review the merits of these truancy prevention programs as part of their continued efforts toward truancy reduction.

Prevention Strategy Number 10:

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development will Launch the New Jersey Youth Corps After Hours Program to provide programs and recreation services during the late afternoon and early evening hours when adolescents and young adults are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors.

The New Jersey Youth Corps currently assists young adults, ages 16-25, who have left high school prior to completion with the skills needed to obtain a diploma and prepare for employment. The program combines community service “crew based” projects with academic instruction in a service-learning environment, provides employability and life skills development, personal counseling and transition services. Twelve Youth Corps sites throughout New Jersey serve between 900-1,000 youth annually. Alumni serve as volunteer mentors for current Youth Corps participants. The program has very specific and rigorous outcomes requirements that can serve as a model for other programs and has been the recipient of five National Exemplary Service Awards.

To build on the success of the program, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development will launch the New Jersey Youth Corps extended hours program, **Youth Corps, After Hours**, to provide programs and recreation services during the late afternoon and early evening hours when adolescents and young adults are more likely to engage in delinquency.¹⁷ These safe environments will provide youth with opportunities to engage in a wide variety of skills-enhancing activities including: culinary arts, photography, publication design and development, marketing theater, movie development, community service activities, tutoring, team building, and mentoring. There will also be movie nights, family and friends nights, parent nights, exercise programs, music programs and dance programs. Special programming will be made available for youth returning from Juvenile Justice Commission programs, youth in foster care, or those referred through “stationhouse adjustments.”¹⁸

Prevention Strategy Number 11:

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development in partnership with the private sector will implement the “Governor’s Youth Jobs and Training Initiative.”

Research has shown that young people who do not have an interest in, or access to, education, training or fulfilling employment are more likely to engage in offending behavior. Encouraging interest in education and work can reduce delinquency in the short-term, and provide youth with both short and

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long-term pathways to employment that increase their work capacity and also increase the likelihood of improved long-term outcomes.

The underlying approach to address employment barriers for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders is to assess the needs of employers generally and specifically and then counsel juvenile offenders in how they can develop the skills and traits that employers desire in their employees.²²

The Governor's Youth Jobs and Training Initiative will provide alternatives to gangs and guns, by providing youth, ages 14-25, with an opportunity to work and prepare for a future career. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development will take the lead, through the One-stop Career Centers, to establish, enroll, place and retain youth in paid and unpaid summer youth positions.

The initiative will enlist public and private partners to provide summer jobs, mentoring and training. The Department of Labor and other public partners will mentor and support youth to provide a positive experience for both employee and employer.

The initiative will also develop corporate partners that are willing to provide youth with opportunities to be exposed to different careers and to learn the skills that will lead to long-term employment. The training component of the program will provide youth with at least eight hours of basic skills, career preparation and work readiness training and will also place youth in paid or unpaid summer jobs. The initiative will provide on-going support to the employer and the youth candidates.

Model Programs and Best Practices Strategies

The most effective strategies for reducing delinquency and other problem behaviors adopt a multi-faceted, multi-pronged community-based continuum approach. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, through a cooperative agreement with Development Services Group, has created a Model Programs Guide²⁰ that includes information about scientifically proven prevention and intervention programs that target problem behaviors among youth. Programs found in the web-based guide can and should be used to assist juvenile justice practitioners, administrators, and researchers to develop effective prevention and intervention continuums that enhance accountability, ensure public safety and reduce delinquency.

The Model Programs Guide also sets forth best practice criteria that include the following characteristics of the most successful programs:²¹

- Delivered at a high dosage and intensity
- Comprehensive – the more risk and protective factors addressed the more effective.
- Appropriately timed
- Developmentally appropriate
- Socio-culturally relevant
- Implemented by well-trained, effective staff
- Supported by strong organizations
- Skills training is implemented using varied active methods
- Based on strong theory and accurate information
- Evaluated regularly

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Agencies interested in replicating these programs should consider the costs of both program implementation as well as rigorous evaluation research. For communities engaged in local assessments of risk and protective factors, the OJJDP Model Programs Guide is an important resource since it provides a wealth of information on programs that work with different populations and for different problem behaviors as well as contacts for professionals currently operating model and best practice programs.

Through the Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods, the State encourages funding and implementation of best practice and Model Programs in communities. These programs will improve outcomes for at-risk and court involved youth and will provide additional program options for the courts.

In addition to a focus on funding OJJDP Model programs, it is also important to recognize the many promising prevention and intervention programs currently operating statewide. Some of these programs already replicate the Model Programs, while others are yet to be evaluated. Taken together, these programs make up the current continuum of local delinquency prevention and intervention programs available to families, schools, communities and the courts. The State encourages, to the extent possible, the evaluation of these existing programs along the criteria used to evaluate nationally-recognized best practice models, and the replication of promising existing programs.

Prevention Strategy Number 12:

Provide a comprehensive continuum of prevention programs that consider the developmental stages of children and adolescents by including early, mid and late childhood prevention strategies that have been shown to reduce long-term youth violence and crime.

Research has shown that the earlier families and communities address risk factors and enhance protective factors, the less likely it is that children will engage in delinquent behavior.²² In general, the research suggests that a comprehensive continuum of prevention programs should address conception to age 6 and then childhood through adolescence.

A report by the Rand Corporation detailed the range of potential benefits to children and their parents of early interventions, as well as the broad societal benefits (economic and otherwise) that can accrue from such programs.²³ Among the model programs identified as achieving positive gains in these areas were the Perry Preschool program, providing early education classes in a nursery school setting along with home visits by teachers, and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project, that provides home visitation by nurses trained in parent education and methods of involving family and friends in assisting and supporting the mother.

Follow-ups of High/Scope Perry Preschool participants at age 27 and 40 showed that, compared to a well-matched control group, participants had fewer arrests for violent, property, drug and other crimes, spent fewer months incarcerated, and were less likely to repeat a grade, more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be employed, more likely to own their homes, and less likely to use social services. Through age 40, studies estimate a return of \$238,995 for the program cost of \$16,648 per participant (return on investment of \$8.74 for every dollar spent on the program, and \$17.07 through age 40).²⁴ Similarly, two other early-childhood education programs, the Child/Parent Centers–Child Enrichment, Parent Involvement (part day for one to two years), and Abecedarian, were found to provide positive returns on investment of \$10.15, and \$2.00, respectively, for every dollar invested in those programs.

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In addition to starting early, primary delinquency prevention initiatives need to reach at-risk youth at least through late adolescence (i.e., age 18 and possibly beyond). Delinquency prevention strategies within the school setting in the early elementary and middle school years might focus on intervening with identified neurological problems, mental health problems and other student and family problems and deficits (e.g., addressing early signs of aggressiveness, attendance and literacy problems). Efforts with high school age youth might focus more on preventing truancy and school dropout, substance abuse and providing job related skills.

Through the strategies presented in the Prevention Plan, service providers, families and communities will be offered opportunities to develop a broad range of primary delinquency prevention and intervention programs that address risk factors and increase protective factors from conception to late adolescence. Families will have access to a myriad of programs and services through the Family Success Centers, communities will be supported in their efforts to identify risk and protective factors through community assessments and state agencies will work collaboratively to fund local programs and services that provide access to model programs and best practices throughout the state.

Prevention Strategy Number 13:

Expand the availability of state supported and directed, but locally implemented, Blueprints Programs for communities and for the courts.

Blueprints for Violence Prevention is a national violence prevention initiative that identified eleven prevention and intervention programs that meet a strict scientific standard of program effectiveness.²⁵ The eleven model programs, called “Blueprints”, are all included in the OJJDP’s Model Programs and represent the gold standard of programs that have been shown to reduce adolescent violent crime, aggression, delinquency and substance abuse.

1. The Mid-western Prevention Project – (community based alcohol and drug prevention)
2. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America – (mentoring program to provide support in all areas of young people’s lives)
3. Functional Family Therapy – (family based prevention for dysfunctional youth ages 11 to 18)
4. Life Skills Training – (classroom curriculum for alcohol and drug prevention)
5. Multi-Systemic Therapy - (cognitive behavior-based treatment)
6. Nurse-Family Partnership – (parent training for first time mothers)
7. Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care – (cognitive behavior treatment, parent training, mentoring, wrap-around case management)
8. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program – (school based bullying prevention program)
9. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (classroom curriculum for 5 to 10 year olds promoting emotional and social competencies).
10. The Incredible Years: Parent, Teacher and Child Training Services Project (curricula for parents and teachers of children exhibiting problem behavior, emphasizes the importance of families and teachers in modeling positive problem solving skills)
11. Project Towards No Drug Abuse – (classroom curriculum for alcohol and drug prevention).

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As a result of OJJDP support and funding, Blueprints has evolved into a large-scale prevention initiative nationwide to both identify model programs and provide training and technical assistance to help sites choose and implement a set of demonstrated effective programs with a high degree of integrity.

Over the past several years, New Jersey has had some limited experience replicating Blueprints Programs. The Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee has funded a number of these efforts including Nurse Family Partnership, Multisystemic Therapy, and Functional Family Therapy.

These programs have been shown to not only be effective, but provide a positive return on investment. For example, the Nurse-Family Partnership is a program that targets first time low-income mothers of any age, and provides them home visits for two hours biweekly for two to two and a half years. Mothers receive training on health and parenting, and support and guidance through the first two years of the child's life. In three separate studies, NFP produced consistent benefits for low-income mothers and their children when compared to comparison groups. The mothers' prenatal health improved, the number of preterm deliveries decreased, there were fewer injuries to children, and mothers made better use of social services. Fifteen-year follow up data also found the program reduces child abuse and neglect, maternal behavioral problems attributable to substance abuse, arrests among the mothers, and resulted in 54 percent fewer arrests and 69 percent fewer convictions among the 15-year-old adolescents, and 58 percent fewer sexual partners. A recent cost-effectiveness analysis of these results found that, compared to program costs, the NFP program provides a return of over \$5.00 for every dollar spent on treatment.

Blueprint programs such as Multisystemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy provide therapeutic interventions for court-involved youth. Under specific circumstances these programs may be appropriate options to re-direct court-involved youth before they commit more serious offenses. Multisystemic therapy has been shown to provide a \$2.64 return for every dollar invested (program cost of almost \$6,000), and Functional Family Therapy to provide a \$13.25 return for every dollar invested (program cost of \$2,197).²⁶

By expanding the availability of Blueprints programs, New Jersey is making a choice to put resources behind the replication of effective strategies, and is willing to ensure fidelity to these models in doing so. Funding will be available to local communities and counties interested in expanding or developing the Blueprints programs through the Governor's Collaborative Community Prevention Program Notice of Availability of Funds. Successful applicants will select a model, buy the model including technical assistance from the developer, and agree to outside evaluation of both the implementation process and its outcomes.

Prevention Strategy Number 14:

The State will support the use of Evidence-Based Gang Prevention and Gang Resistance Model Programs.

Gang Prevention Outreach Models

OJJDP has evaluated several model programs to prevent gang involvement in youth. These programs include the Boys and Girls Club of America's Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach Model, Chicago, Ill.'s BUILD (for Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development), Gang Resistance Is Paramount (GRIP), and Movimiento Ascendencia (Upward Movement) (for girls only).

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Each of these programs have some unique approaches but most include the following basic features; community assessment, community mobilization, intensive outreach to enroll highly at-risk youth, the provision of social opportunities, including encouraging youth to give back to their communities, and strong case management.

The State and local communities should adopt these models or consider the merits of these programs in developing targeted outreach approaches to prevent gang involvement.

Gang Resistance Education Models

The State will continue to support gang resistance education, problem solving and other life skills training through various evidence-based initiatives. These types of programs can range from in-school curriculum to supplemental initiatives that can be delivered in a variety of settings.

At the state level, the Funding Guide will provide information about successful programs and best practices in the areas of gang resistance, anger management and positive life skills. The guide will be posted on the State websites.

Programs include the OJJDP Model Program, Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), the highly successful Gang Awareness Prevention Program (GAPP) developed by the Department of Corrections, and the Phoenix Curriculum in Juvenile Justice.

Prevention Strategy Number 15:

Implement Mentoring Programs that provide youth with relationships with adult figures that provide guidance, nurturing and support.

OJJDP describes mentoring as one of the oldest forms of prevention explaining that:

“Mentoring programs address the need for positive contact with caring adults, and in that way reduce risk factors associated with delinquency (e.g., early and persistent antisocial behavior, alienation, family management problems, and lack of commitment to school) and enhancing protective factors (e.g., healthy beliefs, opportunities for involvement, and social and material reinforcement for appropriate behavior). Resilience research demonstrates that at risk youth who are involved with at least one caring adult are more likely to withstand the range of negative influences, including poverty, parental addiction, family mental illness, and family discord than are peers who are not involved in a similar relationship.”

Most community-based organizations that provided feedback to the Department of Law and Public safety over the course of the past year repeatedly emphasized the importance of mentors as well as how recruiting enough volunteers is an ongoing challenge.

The State currently funds a wide array of mentoring programs, both school- and community-based. For example, the Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) is a community-based wraparound mentoring program that provides strength based assessments, community partnership and intensive supervision to vulnerable kids and families throughout New Jersey. YAP is family focused, and its goal is to empower youth and families with supports that will remain in place after program involvement has ended. YAP is a proven cost effective mentoring alternative to placement and has been identified as a model program by OJJDP. Currently in New Jersey, YAP serves approximately 800 youth and families per year through contracts with Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Behavioral Health.

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In addition, many of the prevention strategies already discussed include heavy mentoring components (e.g. Youth Corp and Youth Corp After Hours, Boys and Girls Clubs and other after-school programs, and the Governor's Youth Jobs and Training Initiative).

Under this strategy, the State will continue to support effective mentoring programs. For example, Big Brothers / Big Sisters is a national Model Program that has been shown to be effective in reducing violent behavior in youth and provides a positive return on investment of \$2 for every dollar spent. Youth meet with their mentors two to four times monthly for 12 months. Big Brothers/Big Sisters operates in all New Jersey counties except Middlesex.

The State will also encourage adoption of other model based mentoring programs such as Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE), which is a violence-prevention, mentoring-based program developed specifically for African-American adolescents. The program consists of three main components, namely a Rites of Passages program, a summer jobs training and placement program, and an entrepreneurial experience program.

In addition, the New Jersey State Bar Association and the State Bar Foundation will partner with the State to provide funding to support promising mentoring initiatives throughout the State. The State will also partner with the NBA Retired Players' League and fraternities and sororities to expand existing and promising mentorship programs.

Prevention Strategy Number 16:

The State will Partner with the Statewide Association of County Youth Services Commissions to Sponsor a Statewide Multi-Disciplinary Conference on Delinquency Prevention Model Programs and Best Practices.

To support replication of model and best practice programming in delinquency prevention and intervention, the State will partner with the Statewide Association of County Youth Services Commissions to sponsor a statewide multi-disciplinary conference showcasing national and local model programs and best practices.

The conference will bring together national experts in delinquency prevention/intervention research, and program development and administration to share their experience and expertise in implementing and operating model and best practice programs. Attendees will learn about implementing science-based, effective strategies that reduce adolescent problem behaviors and delinquency. The Conference will be scheduled for the fall of 2008.

Program Delinquency/Gang Prevention and Intervention models will be selected for the conference from various national model program databases such as the Blueprints for Violence Prevention; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide; and Expert and Promising programs of the U.S. Department of Education Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools. Program developers of selected evidence-based programs will be invited to present their research and programs' strategies.

Gang Awareness Education

Prevention Strategy Number 17:

Provide education to interested parties regarding gang membership, gang identification, and effective intervention strategies.

Identifiers of gang-related behavior often vary from region to region and can change quickly over time. In an effort to assist local municipalities to educate parents, teachers and other community stakeholders about the warning signs of gangs and gang activity that may be taking place in the community, the Attorney General's office will establish a committee to develop a gang awareness and education template that will provide consistent and accurate gang information for community presentations. While the template will be standardized for statewide use, the design will allow for information to be tailored to individual communities.

Through a collaborative partnership between the Department of Law and Public Safety and the Department of Education, gang awareness training also will be provided to all county school administrators.

The Division of Criminal Justice will continue to maintain and update the Gang-Free website that contains useful links to a number of gang information sources, as well as prevention resources for parents.

Evaluation and Accountability Strategies: Measuring Effectiveness

While it is considered best practice for government to harness its resources to collectively prevent and reduce delinquency, in the end these efforts should lead the State toward achieving the goal of increased public safety. It is therefore necessary to ask a number of critical effectiveness questions of the initiative, including: To what extent did the State achieve the overall goal? How did each of the strategies impact on achievement of the goal? How successful was implementation of the individual programs associated with delinquency prevention, and what were the overall outcomes? Did the State achieve any cost savings or create any efficiency through the implementation of these strategies? To answer these questions, it is important to measure the outcome of prevention efforts on both juvenile crime and on communities.

For the purposes of the Prevention Plan, evaluation will take two forms, system evaluation and program evaluation. A system evaluation asks whether the overall system, or a particular statewide initiative is "working" to achieve its stated objectives. Key characteristics of system evaluation include analysis of policy and practice, and outcomes as they relate to the stated goal.

Program evaluation develops methodologies for assessing whether a particular program, such as the replication of OJJDP Model Programs, has met its objectives by scientifically assessing both program process and outcomes. Key characteristics of program evaluations include an experimental or quasi-experimental research design, examination of target population, program components and their delivery, program completion rates and long-term outcomes (e.g. recidivism analysis) of youth served by these programs.

New Jersey currently lacks statewide capacity to conduct regular evaluations of major initiatives or of local programs. Each state and local agency should review its capacity to complete system and program evaluations, and work to develop evaluation capacity as part of this plan. The State will enhance the capabilities housed in its Statistical Analysis Center to ensure that baseline measures of law enforcement initiatives are collected and tracked over time, and to provide support for broader system and program evaluation.

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Prevention Strategy Number 18:

Work with Researchers and Academicians to Develop a Comprehensive Evaluation Plan of the Implementation and Outcomes of Recommendations found in the Prevention Plan.

Prevention/Intervention Objectives

The State, in collaboration with experts in the evaluation of broad-based government initiatives, will develop a comprehensive evaluation plan to conduct an ongoing analysis of the implementation and outcomes of recommendations found in the Prevention Plan. By measuring the extent to which each of the plan's objectives has been met, over time, the state and local communities can plan and assess their work in the area of delinquency prevention and intervention. These measures will be assessed qualitatively through surveys and site visits and quantitatively by tracking the numbers of counties and local governments that are participating in these initiatives, and the amount of services provided. The following are some examples of the Prevention Plan objectives:

- Increase capacity at the state and local level to measure programs' operational performance, i.e., whether they meet contractual obligations, serve expected number of participants, track number of program completions,
- Increase and centralize local capacity to provide information and needed services in the local community for children and families dealing with problem behaviors,
- Increase the number of prevention model programs implemented and evaluated throughout New Jersey, at each developmental level for at-risk children and youth.
- Increase the number of stationhouse adjustments in targeted communities,
- Increase knowledge of gang membership, identification and effective intervention strategies among interested parties.

Outcome Measures

The extent to which the State achieves its objectives will have an impact on outcomes with regard to juvenile crime in communities. Below are examples of possible measures to help the State and local communities better understand the impact of their collective efforts. Using this type of information, over time, the State will better assess what is and is not working with regard to prevention and intervention efforts.

Examples of Juvenile Justice and Community Outcomes

- Decrease in statewide juvenile arrests for violent crime, murder, robbery and weapons offenses.
- Decrease in the number of commitments to JJC.
- Decrease in truancy rates.
- Decrease in violence/vandalism/weapons incidents in schools.

Program Performance Measures and Outcomes

New Jersey currently funds hundreds of programs designed to prevent or intervene in delinquency. Replication of best practice Model Programs often requires sophisticated evaluation methodologies to determine program effectiveness and is important in understanding whether replication of the models is having an impact on the overall goal. But even with respect to the broader set of prevention and

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intervention programs, understanding at a basic level performance and outcomes is important. Individual programs funded to prevent or intervene in delinquency will minimally be required to identify and report on basic measures of program performance and outcomes. Using this information, communities and the State will have a broader understanding of “what works” with certain populations, under certain conditions, as well as the ability to correct programs that are not achieving their goals. In addition, programs that work can be replicated throughout the State as part of our overall strategy for reducing crime and supporting healthy communities. This strategy encourages State agencies that provide funds for delinquency prevention and intervention programming to consider a policy of “set-aside” funding for the purposes of conducting program evaluations.

Prevention Strategy Number 19:

The Office of the Attorney General will re-design its Research and Evaluation Unit to create a Statistical Analysis Center that will provide analytical, research, and evaluation support for crime reduction strategies.

The Office of the Attorney General will re-design its Research and Evaluation Unit to create a Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), to elevate strategic analysis as a high priority. SACs are units or agencies at the state government level that use operational, management, and research information from all components of the criminal justice system to conduct objective analyses of statewide and system wide policy issues.

Staffing for the newly formed SAC will be provided by the Attorney General’s Office, and will include a Director of Research, as well as several analysts, geo-mapping specialists and information technology staff. The SAC will have a broad range of responsibilities including: collecting relevant baseline state and local data on crime and its correlates, tracking the use of stationhouse adjustments and other interventions statewide, and evaluating the outcomes of crime reduction strategies funded by the Attorney General’s Office.

NEW AND EXPANDED INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF THE PREVENTION PLAN

The following new or expanded initiatives empower communities to organize to achieve specific objectives including increasing program participation in after-school and other prevention programs, community beautification, and enhancing the range of activities available to youth.

Coordinate Operation Ceasefire New Jersey and Americorps Volunteers to conduct targeted outreach to maximize utilization of existing state supported programs.

Building on the importance of community involvement in protecting at-risk youth and providing them opportunities to grow to healthy and satisfying adulthoods, this initiative seeks to maximize participation rates in existing state after-school and enrichment programs (NJA3, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 21st Century Learning Centers, GEAR Up, etc).

Adopting the model developed by the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) the state will enlist CeaseFire Outreach workers and Americorps volunteers to conduct intensive outreach activities to seek children out in troubled neighborhoods and involve parents and guardians to ensure that youth participate in available programs.

The State will create or expand after-school academic enrichment programs statewide.

The degree to which children are connected to school is both a risk and protective factor for juvenile delinquency. As a protective factor, strong bonds to education increase the likelihood that children will graduate from high-school, remain delinquency-free and be better prepared to enter the workforce and obtain jobs that pay living wages. As a risk factor, the link between school failure and delinquency is well established.²⁷

Educational attainment, in itself, does not predetermine whether an individual will engage in crime. However, existing evidence suggests that education and graduation rates relate to crime rates. Data from numerous sources including the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that people with the least education disproportionately end up committing crimes and being imprisoned.²⁸

New Jersey's high school graduation rate can be a proxy measure for how well the State is faring in terms of attachment to school. For the 2000/2001 school year, the New Jersey graduation rate was 77%. For the same school year, the graduation rate in New Jersey's twenty major cities was 49%. During the past four school years, graduation rates have increased, but are still low in the major cities. For the 2004/2005 school year, statewide graduation rates increased to 84% and graduation rates for the twenty major cities increased to 66%.

In addition, after school programs provide supervised and structured activities to keep students safe and provide an alternative to risky behaviors. Violence to and by teenagers has been shown to peak in the hours immediately after school. While crimes by adults peak at 11 o'clock at night, violent crimes by juveniles peak between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. on school days. Studies suggest that juveniles injure more victims in the hours around the close of school than any other time of the day.²⁹In a continued effort to increase children's attachment to school and provide safe, supervised activities for students after school, the Department of Education will expand or create after school academic enrichment programs

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throughout the state. Title IV, Part B of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 defines 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) as centers that offer academic remediation and enrichment activities in conjunction with a broad array of other enrichment activities in the areas of arts, culture, youth development and physical activity to students and their adult family members when school is not in session.

Ten new 21st Century Community Learning Centers are scheduled to open in New Jersey by October 2007, bringing the total number of grants the Department has awarded to 55. These programs will operate in 148 sites and serve approximately 15,593 youth in grades four through twelve. Along with the academic enrichment component, the Centers are required to infuse character education throughout their programs and may also offer a student-mentoring component, which research indicates helps to reduce participation in gang-related activities.

In addition to the federal grants, the State has invested \$15 million in funding for after-school programs run by New Jersey After 3, Inc. An expansion of these programs this year has already brought the total number of children served by New Jersey After 3 to over 15,000. In total, state and federally funded after-school programs in New Jersey serve more than 30,000 children in the State. New Jersey's investment in quality after school or out-of-school time programs can lead to a positive school climate, increase school safety and security and reduce school violence and related problems.

The State will expand early childhood programs and services to more low-income students.

Under the Abbott preschool program, the State invests over \$500 million to provide high quality preschool opportunities to all three- and four-year-olds in the Abbott districts. As described earlier, the long-term benefits of early childhood education are clear. In addition to maintaining our commitment to Abbott preschool, in the fiscal year 2008 budget, the Governor included a \$10 million initiative to improve the quality of early childhood experiences for low-income students in other districts. This new program, called the Preschool Quality Enhancement Awards, will be used to fund improvements in teacher certification, curriculum, and professional development for early childhood providers in Non-Abbott districts. The intention is to begin to replicate the high quality Abbott programs in other school districts.

Furthermore, in the fiscal year 2008 budget, the Governor included \$26 million in new funding to assist school districts with covering the cost of full-day kindergarten. This additional funding benefited 185 school districts, in addition to the Abbott districts who already receive state support for full-day kindergarten.

The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will implement the "Governor's Youth Camp" for at-risk youth ages 9 to 11 and will expand its National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program.

Governor's Youth Camp

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will launch the Governor's Youth Camp (GYC) in July 2008. The mission of the GYC is to provide a one-week structured atmosphere fostering learning, fun, discipline, leadership and personal growth for at-risk New Jersey children ages 9 to 11.

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The program seeks to improve participant physical fitness and help them improve their health and nutrition, gain skills in leadership and teamwork, explore new paths of living away from gangs and drugs, learn to adapt to new situations and surroundings, and understand the power of education for self improvement. Schools and community-based outreach programs will be used as a tool to target children attending the Governor's Youth Camp.

National Guard ChalleNGE Program

The goal of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program is to improve the education, life skills, and employment potential of high school dropouts. This is accomplished through the National Guard by providing military-based training, supervised work experience and by advancing the core program components. These core components include assisting participants to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent, developing leadership qualities, promoting fellowship and community service, developing life-coping skills and job skills and improving physical fitness, health and hygiene.

The State will increase its investment in this program by increasing the size of each of the two annual classes.

The State will Open a Youth Center at the Newark Armory.

Major General Rieth has agreed to allow Newark to use the armory facility to house a youth center. Modeled after the centers opened at the Jersey City Armory and the New York City facility, the goal is for the youth center to evolve as a multi-purpose athletic, educational and cultural center for children.

The State will continue to support the New Jersey State Police Explorers and Youth Leadership Program

Currently, NJSP offers its Explorers and Youth Leadership programs in several communities. They both seek to mitigate risk factors and bolster protective factors for juvenile delinquency by emphasizing family involvement, school and community bonding strategies, decision making and conflict resolution.

As part of the Public Safety Plan, NJSP will work with local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops and law enforcement agencies to expand these programs in the twenty cities that are most at risk for gangs and violent crime.

The State will pilot a Community Gardens Initiative in five cities.

Encouraging communities to take ownership of their surroundings is a great way to bolster protective factors. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture will fund a pilot to establish community gardens and markets in five cities, with start-up costs of \$5,000 apiece. Rutgers University's Master Gardener Program will be approached about providing technical support.

Ideally, the gardens would be public-private partnerships to reduce the need for continual cash infusions of State funds. Going forward, this will require identifying companies/individuals in or near the five cities to become sponsors (e.g. Campbell's Soup in Camden). Each garden could establish a customer base to which the items they grow could be sold (e.g., flowers grown in a garden in Newark could be sold to gift shops at hospitals for re-sale). Also, gardens growing seasonal produce could serve as one of the suppliers to local feeding organizations.

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Participation in this job-skills program would be targeted to at-risk youth and re-entering inmates. Referrals would come through social services and the courts for at risk youth, and the DOC for inmates. Participant will learn job skills for their re-entry into society.

The State will Pilot a Farmer's Market Initiative in one city.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture will partner with local New Jersey farms to pilot a program to bring fresh produce to one pilot city through Farmers' Markets. Under this program, families will be able to use food stamps to purchase food from these Farmers' Markets.

CONCLUSION

The Prevention Plan is based on the premise that, along with law enforcement efforts to stem the tide of gang membership and crime, preventing youth from involvement in these activities holds the most significant promise for improving public safety. To achieve its goals, the Plan encourages state agencies and local governments to coordinate their efforts to identify and address the risk and protective factors associated with delinquency. Recognizing that a truly successful prevention strategy cannot be implemented by government alone, the Plan also empowers communities to join government in preventing and intervening in violent activity, and provides financial and structural support for such efforts.

The Plan embraces a variety of different programs, offered by both governmental and non-governmental actors, but unified by the fact that they target those areas the State has identified as most protective of our youth; namely, supporting families in their communities, expanding opportunities for youth enrichment, job training and employment, emphasizing the importance of education and mentoring relationships, and reducing truancy, a key risk factor in future delinquency. Wherever feasible, the Plan seeks to facilitate the implementation of Model Programs for prevention and intervention. At the same time, however, the Plan envisions a longer-term goal of developing a comprehensive continuum of prevention programs from conception through adolescence.

Finally, in working with ten state agencies to set aside more than \$36 million in existing government resources to fund the strategy, the Plan practices what it preaches, namely, multi-level collaboration and an approach designed to ensure that the State's limited resources will be used more effectively.

The Plan also provides a structure to ensure oversight at the highest level of government, and announces the State's commitment to evaluate the impact of our strategy over time. Such self-analysis is key to ensuring that the programs we are funding actually work and that resources are not wasted by duplication or ineffectual approaches.

This ambitious and comprehensive plan is evidence of the State's commitment to public safety through coordination, funding, best practice programming and evaluation. Most significantly, it is evidence of New Jersey's commitment to its youth. By giving youth the tools to turn their backs on violence and giving communities the resources to stop violence before it infects them and their young people, the Plan embraces a vision of New Jersey in which all youth will have the chance to learn, work and have productive and nurturing relationships. Working together to implement these strategies, we can make our communities safer and give all New Jersey's children the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

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Endnotes

- 1 The twenty cities are Asbury Park, Atlantic City, Bridgeton, Camden, East Orange, Elizabeth, Irvington, Jersey City, Lakewood, Newark, New Brunswick, North Bergen, Orange, Passaic, Paterson, Perth Amboy, Plainfield, Trenton, Union City, and Vineland. They were selected based on crime statistics and their presence in the Association for Children of New Jersey's Kidscount.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division (2000)(2005)(base for incorporated places: 2005; for unincorporated places 2000).
- 3 New Jersey State Police (2005). Uniform Crime Report. Trenton, NJ; Violence in New Jersey: The Impact of Gangs - Presentation by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services made at the New Jersey State Gang Summit 2006, available at nj.gov/health/chs/oisp/documents/nov06_gang_summit.pdf (last visited September 19, 2007).
- 4 New Jersey State Police (2007). 2007 New Jersey State Police Street Gang Survey of Municipal Police Agencies. Trenton, NJ.
- 5 Child population: United States Census Bureau (2000). United States Census, 2000. Washington, DC. www.census.gov; Percent of Children in Poverty, Median Household Income, Single Parent-led Household: United States Census Bureau (2000). United States Census 2000. Washington, DC. As cited in Association for Children of New Jersey. 2006. 2006 Kidscount. Newark, NJ. www.acnj.org; Births to Teens, Infant Mortality: New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (2004). As cited in Association for Children of New Jersey. 2006. 2006 Kidscount. Newark, NJ.; Child abuse and neglect referrals: New Jersey Department of Human Services (2004). As cited in Association for Children of New Jersey. 2006. 2006 Kidscount. Newark, NJ.; Performance on New Jersey Achievement Exams: New Jersey Department of Education (2004/2005). As cited in Association for Children of New Jersey. 2006. 2006 Kidscount. Newark, NJ.; High School Graduation Rate: Center for Government Services, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University as cited in Association for Children of New Jersey. 2006. 2006 Kidscount. Newark, NJ.
- 6 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1995). Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders. Washington, DC.
- 7 Snyder, H.M. (1988). Court Careers of Juvenile Offenders. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- 8 The Alliance for Excellent Education (August 2006). Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings. Washington, DC. www.all4ed.org/publications/savingfutures.pdf
- 9 Justice Policy Institute (2007). Fact Sheet: Effective Investments in Public Safety: Unemployment, Wages and the Crime Rate. Washington, DC. www.justicepolicy.org
- 10 Small, S.A., Reynolds, A.J., O'Connor, C., & Clooney, S.M., What Works, Wisconsin: What Science Tells Us about Cost-Effective Programs for Juvenile Delinquency Prevention. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison. oja.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=6444&locid=97
- 11 Institute of Medicine (1994). Reducing Risks for Mental Health Disorders: Frontiers for Preventive Intervention Research. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. P 18, 57, 62, 205 as cited in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1995). The Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders. Washington, DC. 17-18.; see also Small, S.A., Reynolds, A.J., O'Connor, C., & Clooney, S.M., What Works, Wisconsin: What Science Tells Us about Cost-Effective Programs for Juvenile Delinquency Prevention. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison. oja.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=6444&locid=97.
- 12 CYSCs fund primary delinquency prevention, police diversion, court diversion, detention, detention alternatives and disposition options for the Family Court and re-entry programs.
- 13 County Youth Services Commissions exist in all 21 counties. Made up of key juvenile justice stakeholders, they are the identified planners of county delinquency prevention programs, as well as detention and disposition options for the courts.
- 14 Municipal Youth Services Commissions are operational in many municipalities in Somerset County, as well as in the cities of Trenton and Camden.
- 15 Heilbrunn, J.Z. (January 2007). Pieces of the Truancy Jigsaw: A Literature Review. Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. Denver, CO.
- 16 Henry, K. and D. Huizinga. (November 2005). The Effect of Truancy on the Onset of Drug Use and Delinquency. Paper presented at the National Criminal Justice Association Annual Meeting. Toronto. As cited in Heilbrunn, J.Z. (January 2007). Pieces of the Truancy Jigsaw: A Literature Review. Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. Denver, CO.
- 17 Heilbrunn, note 15.

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18 A stationhouse adjustment is an alternative method that law enforcement agencies may use to handle first-time juvenile offenders who have committed minor juvenile delinquency offenses within their jurisdiction.

19 National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (2005). "Overcoming Barriers to Employment for Youth in the Juvenile System: A Practical Guide." National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC.

20 Available at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov.

21 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1995). Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders. Washington, DC.

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23 Karoly, L., P. Greenwood, S.S. Everingham, J. Hoube, M.R. Kilburn, C.P. Tydell, M. Sanders and J. Chiesa (1998). Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know about the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention. Rand Corporation. Santa Monica, CA.

24 Small et. al., note 10 at 12.

25 Excerpted from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence website at: www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints. All information contained herein comes directly from this site.

26 Small et. al., note 10 at 14.

27 Heilbrunn, J.Z. (January 2007). Pieces of the Truancy Jigsaw: A Literature Review. Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. Denver, CO.

28 Justice Policy Institute (2007). Fact Sheet: Effective Investments In Public Safety: Unemployment, Wages and the Crime Rate. Washington, DC.

29 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (1999). Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report.

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NOTES:

