

**LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE**

**COMMUNITY PREVENTION EFFORTS TOWARD  
YOUTH CRIME AND VIOLENCE**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT**

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## INTRODUCTION

Concern is growing nationwide over the escalation of violent juvenile crime. At the same time, national trends indicate that young people are the disproportionate victims of violence. Violence affects the quality of life for those who experience it, witness it, or live in fear of being a victim. When young people are involved, the impact is magnified. Few communities have not experienced a violent crime involving a child either as the victim or suspect.

Between 1987 and 1991, the number of violent crime arrests of juveniles increased by 50%, twice the increase of arrests for persons 18 years old or older.<sup>1</sup> Most alarming, juvenile arrests for murder during this time increased by 85%, as compared to 21% for persons 18 and older.<sup>2</sup> Victims in 30% of these juvenile murder arrests were under 18 years of age.<sup>3</sup>

Juvenile arrest for heroin and cocaine increased over 700% between 1980 and 1990.<sup>4</sup> In 1990, 20% of high school students reported carrying a weapon at least once during the past month, while 37% of the violent juvenile crime occurred in or near their schools.<sup>5</sup> In 1991, 20% of all weapons arrest were juvenile offenders, and the 122,900 arrest of juvenile for violent crimes was the highest in history.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to popular belief, teenagers are victimized at higher rates than adults. In the National Crime Victimization Surveys for 1985 -1988, youth under age 20 were only 14% of the survey population, yet they accounted for over 30% of the violent crime victims.<sup>7</sup>

Approximately 67 of every 1000 teenagers were victims of violent crime as compared to 26 of 1000 persons over 20 years of age.<sup>8</sup> In 1991, FBI data shows more than 2,200 youth under 18 years old were murdered, an average of six homicide victims per day.<sup>9</sup> And finally, suicide rates for youth ages 15 to 19, increased 35% from 1979 to 1989.<sup>10</sup>

These statistics have communities across the nation desperate for solutions to the juvenile crime problem. It is only natural that they look to their criminal justice professionals for these solutions. This paper contains a variety of programs currently underway to fight this problem. It is my desire for this paper to serve as a reference resource for law enforcement managers to develop prevention efforts unique to their communities, that will prevent or reduce youth crime and violence.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence continues to mount that a small proportion of offenders commit most of the serious and violent juvenile crimes. Decades of research on delinquent careers and prevention have identified the following risk factors as contributing to serious, violent and chronic juvenile crime:

- Weak family attachments
- Lack of consistent discipline
- Physical abuse and neglect
- Poor school performance
- Delinquent peer groups
- High-crime neighborhoods<sup>11</sup>

Across the nation, a variety of community organizations offer assistance in the prevention of youth violence. These organizations share a common goal, but because

they are diverse, they choose somewhat different approaches to the problem. This diversity is an assistance in the fight against youth crime as a greater number of youth may be reached, but it may also be a hindrance, because in many cases the organizations are not aware of the each others objectives creating confusion and duplication of effort. These organization include:

#### **Government Agencies/Organizations**

Health Departments Social Services  
Police Departments  
Secondary and Elementary Schools  
Neighborhood Organizations

#### **Volunteer Service Organizations**

Veteran's Groups  
Salvation Army  
Goodwill Industries  
Fraternities / Sororities

#### **Professional Groups**

Medical / Nursing Associations  
Legal Associations

#### **Private Organizations**

Urban League  
Church/Religious Organizations  
Colleges and Universities  
Local Businesses  
Media Organizations  
YMCA / YWCA  
Entertainers  
Professional Sport Organizations

### Clubs

Boys / Girls Clubs  
Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts  
Big Brother / Big Sister Clubs  
Other Youth Clubs<sup>12</sup>

Activities to prevent youth violence historically employ one of three strategies: education, legal and regulatory, and modification of the health and social environment.<sup>13</sup> Although the prevention efforts of police agencies may be somewhat involved in these recognized strategies, I submit their efforts must be altered significantly not only to assist, but in many cases lead the charge in the fight against this violence.

Again, it is my desire for this project to serve as a reference resource for the current programs available for use by communities in their struggle against youth crime and violence.

## **III. EDUCATION**

Throughout the nation, a number of educational programs have been, or are currently underway to prevent youth crimes. Some of these efforts include mentoring programs, conflict resolution, social skills training, parenting skills, public education, and alternative campuses for troubled or "at risk kids".

### **III. A. MENTORING**

Research indicates that one of the most effective ways to reduce children's risk is to strengthen their bond with positive, pro-social family members, teachers or other

significant adults, and/or pro-social friends.<sup>14</sup> Children who are attached to positive families, friends, school, and community and who are committed to achieving the goals valued by these groups are less likely to develop problems in adolescence.<sup>15</sup> Children who are bonded to others with healthy beliefs are less likely to do things that threaten that bond, such as use drugs, drop out of school or commit crimes.

Studies of successful children who live in high risk neighborhoods or situations indicate that strong bonds with a care-giver can keep children from getting into trouble. Positive bonding makes up for many other disadvantages caused by risk factors or environmental characteristics.<sup>16</sup>

The people that children are bonded to need to have **clear, positive** standards for behavior. The content of these standards is what protects young people. For example, being opposed to youth alcohol and drug use is a standard that has shown to protect young people from the damaging effects of substance abuse risk factors.<sup>17</sup>

Mentoring may be accomplished through the bonding with a peer, or an adult. Most schools offer mentoring programs where a student experiencing difficulty with a particular topic is paired with another student who has mastered that topic. In some cases, programs such as the, "Help One Student to Succeed, or HOSTS" at the Longview I.S.D. allow adult volunteers to tutor a student for one hour per week in the subject areas that they need help.

Another program involves deputies of the Sacramento County, Ca. Sheriff's Office. The "OK Program" brings black teenagers together with one of 26 participating deputies.

The deputies serve as role models, providing guidance to the teens. The program gives particular concern to the lethal problems young black males are facing with drugs and gangs.<sup>18</sup>

The program consist of four steps--one for each academic quarter of the school year. To advance, students must attend school, bring school materials to class each day, submit homework assignments on time and follow class rules.<sup>19</sup> The deputies conduct study hall sessions on Saturday mornings at a local sports complex. After lunch, the deputies, students, and tutors play basketball, touch football, or weight train together.

When a student has successfully completed a step, he is first rewarded with a certificate of completion and then becomes eligible to be included in the events of the month. Events include attending drug-free dances, pro hockey games, and taking courses in karate, swimming or tennis.

The drug free dances held last year drew a multi-ethnic crowd of more than 500 teenagers. Each event was completed without incident! To sum up the success of the program, one deputy said:

"All the kids in the OK Program are outstanding young men. The more time we spend around them, the more we realize how outstanding they are. Just being there as mentors and role models and giving them clear expectations of what we expect from them and what we will tolerate and simply won't, has made a big difference in their lives ".<sup>20</sup>

### III. B. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is a natural human state, which is better approached with skills than avoidance. More appropriate and effective systems are needed to deal with conflict



particularly with youth and in the school setting than expulsion, suspension, court intervention, and detention. The use of mediation as a conflict resolution method can result in a reduction of violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension.<sup>21</sup>

Schools across the nation are turning to mediation programs or "teams" as a means of nonviolent conflict resolution to be used for disputes that arise in the school setting. Staff and students, as well as parents, are trained as mediators to help disputants reach mutually satisfactory agreements that will allow the parties to continue their relationships. Mediation is a voluntary process. Mediators do not impose solutions on the disputants, but remain neutral, nonpunitive, and nonjudgemental. Mediators function as catalyst in the mediation process. They are essential to the resolution of the conflict, but take no invasive part in solution.<sup>22</sup>

The School Team Mediation process allows the participants to:

- Express their feelings and point of view
- Identify their needs
- Clarify Issues
- Understand the other party's view
- Explore solutions
- Reach an agreement that is satisfactory to all<sup>23</sup>

Through direct participation in the mediation process, students learn and practice new skills for managing anger and conflict. The program also seeks to improve the environment of the school setting by helping students and staff address and solve the underlying conflicts that often cause infractions. The use of mediation reduces the number of disputes that become violent or hurtful and reduce the amount of staff time spent on discipline, allowing teachers to spend more time teaching!

Through the use of student mediation and conflict resolution, students learn lifelong communication and problem-solving skills.

Results of the training are enhanced self-esteem, student efficacy, and a dramatic reduction in discipline referrals. Schools consistently report a 60 to 80 per cent drop in discipline referrals, fewer fights, and sense of caring and peace throughout the campus.<sup>24</sup>

### III. C. TRAINING IN SOCIAL SKILLS

Current research strongly supports the need to shift programs that focus on specific symptoms (drug, alcohol, and suicide prevention programs), towards a more general effort to promote wellness and prevent self-destructive, anti-social behavior among youth considered at higher than average risk of developing such behavior.<sup>25</sup>

The Santa Clara County, California Office of Education has identified key conditions and attitudes that predispose youth towards retrograde behaviors:

- Alienation
- Low Self-Esteem
- Low Expectations
- Sense of Cultural Inferiority
- Unhealthy Family Environment
- Learning Disorders
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Inadequate Schools
- Exposure to Substance Abuse

The above risk factors are not guarantees that a young person will engage in delinquency, substance abuse, or other anti-social behaviors, but they do make these behaviors more probable. The more factors present, the higher the risk.<sup>26</sup>

Founded in 1980, **National Training Associates** specializes in training for school personnel, students, mental health professionals, and the community that promotes a coordinated effort to generate healthy lifestyles. Their **Youth Empowering Systems (YES)** training is a method to help educators develop a self-sustaining school team program that is capable of identifying and addressing the problems of at-risk youth. More than four hundred YES training programs have been held in cities across the United States and Canada, resulting in its use on more than one thousand campuses.<sup>27</sup>

Although schools cannot be all things to all children, they are the first setting outside the family where the behavior and feelings of youth come under the close attention of professionally trained adults. Within this same setting, youth are making transitions from relationships with their family to relationships with peers and other adults. Most young people adjust to the new setting with only moderate difficulty. Those who experience serious problems need special support. Schools have access to the majority of the youth in our society, and therefore have the opportunity to provide the skills necessary for empowering them to successfully complete their journey through adolescence.<sup>28</sup>

Helping youth become competent regardless of what they have been dealt in life is fundamental to generational wellness. For schools this means working directly with students to help them become capable adults while acknowledging that outside factors over which schools have no control are often responsible for the adolescent behavioral problems.

These problems can often be attributed to the absence of appropriate role models.

Pro-social skill-building is a school-based technique that provides a role modeling process for skill deficient youngsters while reinforcing an ongoing process for their more fortunate peers.<sup>29</sup>

Pro-social skill-building is a psychoeducational intervention specifically designed to enhance the social, interpersonal, stress management, and planning skills of aggressive, withdrawn, immature, and "normal", but developmentally lagging youth. It can be used with full classrooms at the elementary level and with designated groups at all levels. It relies on a structured learning approach which consists of modeling, role playing, feedback, and generalizing the skill.<sup>30</sup>

### III. D. PARENTING SKILLS

More and more communities are realizing the need for parent education. Parenting is not a skill to be left to chance; communities, schools, churches, organizations, and individuals must join together in the critical role of supporting families.<sup>31</sup>

Today's families have undergone tremendous change. They are experiencing untold pressures and challenges at a time when their resources for support are becoming scarce. Only ten percent of today's families represent the traditional family of past generations: the monogamous, nuclear family with a single bread-winner. Today's family is more likely to be dual-career family, a single parent family, a stepfamily, or a family that has moved an average of fourteen times.<sup>32</sup>

Social, economic, and environmental conditions that exist today all have an effect on the family. All of these conditions, plus others, affect the fabric of the family and development of children. The well-being of families must become a priority for all communities.

The **Practical Parent Education** program is a joint effort of the Plano, Texas I.S.D.; the Plano Community; and Texas Association of School Boards. It is unique in that it pulls from a wide body of literature available today and offers an eclectic, open-ended resource for parent educators to adapt for use in each community. **Practical Parent Education** is more than parents and children; it explores the interactive process that goes on within the family between parents and children, the child's effects on each parent and the parent's effects (drawn from their own unique family of origin) on each child. It is an exploration process through which parents learn more about themselves as they begin to examine their own values and parenting goals.<sup>33</sup>

The **Practical Parent Education** curriculum includes the following sections:

- Understanding Your Role as a Parent
- Developing Trust within Families
- Communicating within the Family
- Building Self-Esteem within the Family
- Understanding Parenting and Power
- Accepting and Growing through Natural Transitions in the Life Cycle
- Parent Educator Facilitation Information<sup>34</sup>

**Practical Parent Education** is an opportunity for parents to feel supported by their communities throughout their child rearing years.

Parenting skills cannot be developed or significantly changed through exposure to a single parenting series, but rather through continued involvement in classes in a supportive environment throughout their child-rearing years. Studies and experience show that when parents take an isolated series of parenting classes they will revert back to their original style of parenting in six to twelve months.<sup>35</sup> Parents must be made aware that these opportunities are available to them on an ongoing basis so that this tendency does not occur.

Parenting is one of life's most important tasks, and parents must feel supported in this process. Most families of today no longer have the extended family and support networks that parents had a generation or two ago. Parent Education as a community effort, offers an opportunity for extended support to today's families.<sup>36</sup>

### III. E. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

In years gone by, the school environment was considered a safe and secure place. The nature and purpose of school meant that none should come to harm in this place. This held true primarily because of the awe that Americans held for education. Respect for education was found even in the most crime-ridden and depressed areas and crossed all racial and religious lines.<sup>37</sup>

When children do not attend school because of violence or the threat of violence, they are hurt both as students seeking an education and as human being. The school becomes a place to fear and avoid, rather than a place to experience trust and welcome. Fear for self or friends often means that students will engage in conduct that they feel will help them survive a confrontation.

Students may choose to carry weapons or they may opt to skip school.

Schools enjoy a substantial degree of internal autonomy with regard to actions taken in response to criminal violations. Often when crimes occur at school, the decision is made to address the problem by means of school discipline, as opposed to dealing with the criminal justice system.<sup>38</sup> Schools often feel that handling the problem internally is more in line with the educational goals, and shows both a supportive and corrective nature, rather than just a punitive one. This approach has strong support of most school officials, as it serves the school's interest. However, it is questionable as to whether the public's safety interest has been served as well.

Police administrators responsible for assuring adequate police protection are hindered by the schools' autonomy to decide which crime and victim information will be released. Selective reporting and exclusion of information obstructs effective decision making and effects the delivery of efficient police services. The failure to report serves to support the violator's perception that their conduct is insignificant and may promote more criminal behavior.<sup>39</sup>

Another problem regarding youth crime reporting is that public opinion polls and unscientific surveys seem to carry more weight than carefully conducted surveys that use randomly selected samples. This further complicates the public's understanding of what types of violence occur and how frequently they occur inside schools.<sup>40</sup>

One recent example is a survey published in August 1993. In this national survey, more than 65,000 sixth through twelfth grade students responded by filling out

and mailing in a questionnaire printed in USA Today. Thirty-seven per-cent indicated that they "don't feel safe at school."<sup>41</sup> This information continues to receive high notoriety and unfortunately sways public opinion more than carefully conducted studies, even though the survey was never intended to be considered scientific.<sup>42</sup>

This observation led the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing School Violence Advisory Panel to conclude that it is impossible to construct state or local policy about school violence with information derived from unscientific opinion polls, media stories, or for that matter, even more carefully conducted national surveys.<sup>43</sup>

Deciding on a school for their children is a process that concerned parents take seriously. It would be a unique parent who did not view information on crime as crucial to making this selection. Schools have a professional obligation to adequately advise parents and the public on issues that impact the reasonable expectations of child safety. To do less compromises the credibility and viability of the total school agenda.

When the community has been fully and openly apprised of the public safety conditions existing within schools, one of two results will occur:

- The reduction of criminal conduct will diminish fear, reinforce the continuation of current school safety policies and practice; or
- Where criminal conduct is present and the quality of school safety is at issue, corrective action will be taken.<sup>44</sup>

Public ignorance of criminal conduct and victimization in schools has diminished the quality of life and the quality of the learning experience for young people. The child intent on learning must be both respected and protected.



The reporting of crime is imperative for the effective response to crime. The selective reporting or the failure to report crime by schools does not serve the public or the schools.

### III. F. ALTERNATIVE CAMPUSES

Many school systems maintain a separate campus or center for students who are assigned for violations of school rules. These reasons may vary from repeated tardiness to fighting. Education is most important in the development of young people, and every child, regardless of circumstances or anti-social behavior, has a legal right to an education.

The centers maintained by schools address the student in need of attention for school infractions, but what about the children placed in juvenile detention centers for criminal violations? Students sent to these centers are often among those students having difficulty with their school work while attending school, and are obviously at-risk for several reasons. Being out of the classroom for the time period required by the Juvenile Justice System places them further behind. An instructional program at the detention center is crucial to the rehabilitation of the students, not only for their academic success, but for their social responsibility.

Approximately 600 children will be held in Texas detention centers on any given day. Between 20,000 to 30,000 will be detained annually. This is a relatively small number compared to the statewide total of school children, but is a critical part of the population that needs help.<sup>45</sup> Children in detention have arrived at a critical

crossroad. A poor choice from the limited alternatives available to them could have an adverse effect on the rest of their lives. Statistics indicate that most serious adult offenders were processed through detention centers several times as juveniles.<sup>46</sup>

Education plays a vital role by providing more choices that can break this cycle. Juvenile Detention centers now attempt to provide the juveniles assigned to them with an education program. The programs follow an approved curriculum, and are taught by certified teachers, usually on a contract basis from the local school district. This program benefits the juveniles assigned on long term detention, or those who have been expelled from their school and remanded to center by the juvenile court as part of the terms of their probation.<sup>47</sup>

A problem does exist in the time required to enroll the juvenile into the program. The child detained for a term of less than two weeks often does not get enrolled prior to release. The missed classwork often goes unfinished after they are released from detention, and return to their school.<sup>48</sup>

#### IV. HEALTH AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT MODIFICATION

Every community, regardless of size or resources, must deal with how it will build a strong and healthy environment in which youth can thrive. While this task is universal, its magnitude, starting point, and even effective solutions can and should vary widely from one community to another. No single answer is adequate, and no single group responsible. By its very nature, caring for youth is a community, not exclusively a family or school task.<sup>49</sup>

Following are the descriptions of programs that attempt to modify or promote a healthy social environment for youth.

#### IV. A. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Recreational activities offer young people opportunities to spend time in a structured and purposeful environment. Recreational interventions cannot be considered a sole answer to youth violence. However, activities that provide outlets for tension, stress, or anger and opportunities for social interactions and constructive problem-solving are important parts of a program with other violence prevention components. Many recreational activities are conducted with these goals across the nation in Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, YMCAs and YWCAs, and local recreation departments.<sup>50</sup>

One program that is gaining extreme popularity is the late or midnight basketball or "hoops" program. This program offers youth a place to go for late night, supervised entertainment. Teams are selected, and coached by volunteers, many of which are police officers. Games are held in the evenings, and in most cases, extend to early morning hours on weekends. In some cases, members of rival gangs play on the same team, unaware of their "enemy". Once they discover they can work together on the court, they often learn they get along on the street also.

This particular program has many advantages for those concerned about the safety of all participants. The game can be held indoors, so weather is not a factor.

Being indoors, access is easily controlled, therefore preventing distraction from non or ineligible participants. Also, the volunteer coaches serve as positive role models for the players, and when that coach is a police officer, the players have the opportunity to have a relationship with a police officer in a "non-threatening" environment.

Columbia, South Carolina has a very well established Mid-night Hoops program, which is one part of their Five-Point Youth Violence Prevention Program. More than 200 youths, both boys and girls, 12-18 years of age, participate in evening and late night basketball leagues. Practices and games take place at 9 different sites. Officials are trained and employed by the city and county recreation departments. On Fridays, games are played between 10 p.m. and 1:30 a.m.<sup>51</sup>

#### IV. B. THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES

Therapeutic activities provide medical, psychological, or other treatment for children who have been abused, injured by violence, or witnessed an unusually violent event. The provision of medical, psychological, and nurturing services helps break the cycle of violence. In addition to child and family counseling, there are several special types of therapeutic services. Some of these include:

**Foster care** programs provide basic physical care and safety from abusive parents. They can be very effective if multiple placements are avoided and foster parents are caring and knowledgeable about the needs of children.

**Respite day care** and **therapeutic day care** provide services in a safe, nurturing, stimulating, organized environment without taking the child entirely out of the home. Day care programs are often the abused child's first contact with other children besides family members. This interaction helps the child adjust to the separation from parents, attain skills during play, and build self-esteem through interaction with peers.

Residential treatment programs target school-age children with special needs, such as emotional disturbances or substance abuse problems.

Crisis management services help groups or individuals deal with the anger, fear, sadness, hopelessness, confusion, and irrational thinking associated with witnessing or being victims of violence.<sup>52</sup>

The Dallas Independent School District Crisis Management Plan divides crises into three levels. The most severe includes terrorist activities or a death at the school. This level also includes severe natural disasters and suicide clusters. For each level, there is a planned coordinated response. The plan includes methods of informing students, families, and the public about the event. It also includes the identification and provision of counseling services to students in need. Each school has a local crisis team. There is also a District crisis team, consisting of social service and psychological experts, which participates in the most stressful events, such as a death at the school.<sup>53</sup>

#### IV. C. PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

The strongest developmental predictor of a child's involvement in violence is a history of previous violence. Although the form and absolute level of an individual's aggression varies considerably throughout the life-span, an individual's relative level of aggression among age-mates shows remarkable continuity and predictability over time. Children and youth also show substantial consistency in their relative level of violence across social domains even though their absolute level typically differs considerably from setting to setting. This consistency across time and social domain may persist into adulthood, despite the well-known process of "maturing-out" of many antisocial behaviors.

A number of factors contribute to keeping the pattern consistent; however, many of these factors are alterable, especially at the stages of child development. For this reason, effective intervention for aggressive and violent behavior in childhood is critical, and the earlier the better.<sup>54</sup>

Preschool programs such as Head Start are designed to help children of low income families develop a greater degree of social competence through developing the child's intellectual skills, fostering emotional and social development, meeting the child's health and nutritional needs and involving parents and community in these efforts.

A 1990 report of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, which grew out of the bipartisan National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, reported that preschool programs like Head Start are among the most cost-effective inner-city crime and drug prevention strategies ever developed.<sup>55</sup> It is estimated that for every \$1.00 spent for preschool education programs (such as Head Start) saves \$6.00 in later special education, crime, welfare, teen pregnancy and incarceration costs!<sup>56</sup>

#### **IV. D. HOME VISITATIONS**

Home visitation is another program directed early that can reduce factors that increase risks for antisocial behavior and clinical dysfunction in childhood and adolescence.<sup>57</sup> This program is an activity that provides services in the home either for an individual or the entire family.

Home visitation programs performed during the prenatal and infancy years of the child focus on preventing health and developmental problems in children born to mothers who are teenagers, unmarried, or of low socioeconomic status. These activities have been found effective in preventing child abuse. Because research shows that abused children are more likely to be violent or be victims of violence as adults, prenatal and infancy home visitation programs may be effective long-term strategy for preventing youth violence. These programs are typically designed to meet the needs of parents for information, emotional support, stress management, and other factors that undermine parents' health habits and care of their children.<sup>58</sup>

One home visitation underway is the Prenatal/Early Infancy Project in Elmira, New York. This project was designed to prevent a wide range of health and developmental problems among children born to young, poor, or unmarried women. In this program, nurses visit pregnant women to provide information and support that encourage the mothers to adopt good health habits, learn the skills needed to care for their infant children, get access to needed community services, achieve educational or occupational goals, and prevent unwanted future pregnancies. Home visits begin in the early stages of pregnancy and continue through the second year of life of the child. Evaluation of this project showed that the health and social skills of participants had improved. In addition, there was a substantial reduction in verified cases of child abuse among the children of at-risk women who were visited at home by the nurses.<sup>59</sup>

#### IV.E. WORK/ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

One item included as a behavior for youth at high-risk of becoming involved in violence is unemployment. A job is a good alternative to drugs, gangs, and involvement in violence.<sup>60</sup> Student work and volunteer activities that are supported by community organizations have a positive influence on youth. Structured job experiences and volunteer activities connect adolescents with supportive adults who act as role models, mentors, and counselors. All the parties involved benefit from this type of activity: schools, organizations, and students.

During the 1980s, a number of national foundations and public agencies began sponsoring initiatives aimed at establishing comprehensive, community-wide strategies for addressing issues of poverty and at-risk youth.<sup>61</sup> Among the most ambitious of these was the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "New Futures" initiative that awarded five year grants of up to \$12.5 million dollars to five cities to develop community strategies for the needs of at-risk youth. Included as one of the initial areas of focus was youth employability development.<sup>62</sup>

One of the cities chosen was Little Rock, Arkansas. By the end of the third year, the Little Rock leadership had begun to view employability as part of a broader community and youth development agenda arising from concerns over youth violence, substance abuse, teenage parenting, and school failure. By the end of 1992, Little Rock had made a commitment to a major planning process around employability with the goal of integrating it into the community's youth efforts.<sup>63</sup>



The East Texas Council of Governments sponsors several youth employment programs for youth ages fourteen through twenty-one. The Summer Youth Program provides employment during the summer months, and the Youth Training Program establishes year round training for youths in order to improve their long-term employability by enhancing their educational and occupational skills. A new direction in the jobs performed by the youth, now requires that they also complete the management functions for the jobs they are given. For example, if the job assignment is the building of a wooden gate, the youth must compute the amount and cost of the supplies for the job, and complete the task within that budget. This additional training will hopefully enhance their skills as well as increase their employability.<sup>64</sup>

#### IV. F. REDUCTION OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

Nearly four decades of research on television viewing and other media have documented the almost universal exposure of American children to high levels of media violence. Ninety-eight percent of American homes have at least one television, which is watched each week for an average of 28 hours by children between the ages of two and eleven, and for 23 hours by teenagers. Children from low-income families are the heaviest viewers of television.<sup>65</sup>

The level of violence on commercial television has remained constant during nearly two decades. In prime time there are 20 to 25 violent acts per hour on Saturday morning children's programs. Although there is less research on cable television and VCRs, the rate of violence for MTV, for example, far exceeds that on commercial television.

More graphic violence, sexual content, and mature themes are readily accessible in the sixty percent of homes in which cable television and VCRs are available.<sup>66</sup>

There is little doubt that higher levels of violence on television are related with the increased acceptance of aggressive attitude and aggressive behavior. Three major national studies - the Surgeon General's Commission report (1972), the National Institute of Mental Health Ten Year Follow-up (1982), and the report of American Psychological Association's Committee on Media in Society (1992) - reviewed hundreds of studies. Each arrived at the conclusion that viewing violence increases violence. In addition, prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to the emotional desensitization toward violence.<sup>67</sup>

The exposure to violence at a young age, can have harmful lifelong consequences. Aggressive habits learned in early life are the basis for behavior patterns in later life. Aggressive children who have trouble in school and in relating to peers tend to watch more television; the violence they see there reinforces their propensity toward aggression, and in turn compounds their academic and social failure.

A study of boys found a significant relation between exposure to TV violence at 8 years of age and antisocial acts--including serious, violent crime and spouse abuse--22 years later.<sup>68</sup>

Violence on television changes attitudes toward violence in significant ways. Even those who do not increase their own violent behavior are affected. Quite often, viewing violence increases one's fear of becoming a victim of crime, resulting in an increase in self-protective behaviors.

News media coverage of school violence has increased over 300 percent in the past two years. With this kind of exposure, it is very easy to justify moving limited resources from academic and educational purposes to pay for armed security, metal detectors, and self-defense seminars for school staff.<sup>69</sup>

The effects of viewing violence on television can be reduced. Children can be taught "critical viewing skills" by parents and in schools so they learn to better understand what they see on television. Children can also learn to think about alternatives to the violence viewed, which may offer solutions to future similar situations the child may encounter.

These protective measures by parents and schools does not remove the film and television industries from their responsibility for reducing the level of violence they illustrate.

Television can be an effective and persuasive teacher of prosocial attitudes and has the potential to make a major contribution toward reducing violence. Some approaches that may enhance television's positive effects include:

- More prosocial messages and nonviolent problem- solving productions;
- Compliance with laws requiring broadcasters to serve the educational and informational needs of children by providing programs that educate children to prevent violence;
- Restricting times when dramatized violence is shown; and
- Creating and using a meaningful rating system that is based on a program's potential for damage to the child rather than on parent's sensitivities.<sup>70</sup>

#### IV. G. USE OF COMMUNITY-BASED CONSORTIUMS

The programs described thus far have been presented individually so that the reader can investigate the different ones available to their communities. In reality, efforts to curb youth violence are rarely conducted independently. Effective programs are based community wide, combining a number of activities to have a maximum impact on the problem, while reaching as many young people as possible.

There are several advantages to a community-wide approach. Community approaches affect the entire environment and are oriented toward changing community norms, values, and policies. Involving the whole community in a prevention effort reaches and engages more people than individual recruitment alone. And, this approach promotes widespread communication of consistent standards for behavior, the need for prevention, and risk and protective factors.<sup>71</sup>

Because community approaches are likely to involve a broad spectrum of individuals, groups, and organizations; they create a greater base of support for behavior change. Unhealthy behaviors like drug abuse, delinquency, school drop out, and teen pregnancy are increasingly viewed in such communities as unacceptable. One by-product is likely to be lower costs for intervention and treatment. Extensive involvement of volunteers also helps to reduce costs.

A broad base of community leadership and involvement in a prevention effort is likely to lead to long-term change as programs and strategies are integrated into services and activities of local organizations and institutions. The community-wide focus creates a unique synergy; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The goals involved toward a community wide process are:

- Involve key community leaders on the board or task force to oversee the program
- Create a task force to conduct a risk and resource assessment, develop an action plan, and monitor its implementation
- Develop a plan compatible to resources, groups, and programs already operating
- Establish a long-term prevention effort strategy
- Give ownership of the plan to the community so it will continue beyond the initial stage of enthusiastic support
- Prepare communities to evaluate their own efforts in order to learn what parts work, and what impact the project has caused.<sup>72</sup>

Several community efforts exist and are underway across the nation. Perhaps, one of the most unique is the Texas City Action Plan to Prevent Crime, or T-CAP initiative aimed to engage seven of the most populous cities of Texas in producing long and short term comprehensive crime prevention action plans. T-CAP participating cities include Arlington, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston.<sup>73</sup>

The National Crime Prevention Council, a private non-profit organization, obtained federal assistance to develop the T-CAP prototype and to provide materials, training, and technical assistance to the T-CAP cities.

In each T-CAP city, the planning coalition is designed as a broad-based, diversified group that represents key community and municipal organizations, specifically including law enforcement and community residents.

In practice, coalition membership in various cities has included, among others, an apartment manager, a City council member, a minister, a citizen who started an anti-gang program, a shopping mall manager, medical personnel, school administrators, an auto dealer, housing officials, youth workers, officers of United Ways and PTAs, youth, and journalists. Ethnic, socio-economic, and other kinds of civic diversity are well reflected.

The planning process includes needs assessment, goal-setting, and in-depth, subject-specific task forces that can involve additional residents and draw on specialized expertise. Action recommendations are then formulated and presented, and an implementation plan is adopted as appropriate.<sup>74</sup>

In Houston, for example, these recommendations include more school security, job-training in the regular curricula, anti-violence education beginning in kindergarten, and arranging school hours to coincide more closely with those of working parents.<sup>75</sup>

Other T-CAP cities have similar goals, some of which began prior to their involvement in T-CAP. San Antonio's "Fighting Back" is a comprehensive drug prevention program of the United Way.<sup>76</sup> The goal of this program is to address alcohol and other drug abuse through a prevention, intervention, treatment, and relapse prevention program. It demonstrates that by consolidating resources and creating a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment and aftercare, communities can, overtime, achieve a reduction in the demand for- and consequently the illegal use of- alcohol and other drugs. This is facilitated by a team of Community Coordinators and Neighborhood Networkers at three Neighborhood

Resource Centers located throughout the target area of the city.<sup>77</sup>

Other cities in the state, though not a member of T-CAP, either had, or have begun similar efforts. The City of Longview began its' "Action Long\*view" in 1989 as a community based strategic planning process.<sup>78</sup> The city council appointed a 16 person executive committee to create a plan that:

- truly represented the desires of the community as a whole, and
- serves as a blueprint for Longview's growth and success in the years to come <sup>79</sup>

Through the planning process five areas were defined as critical to the future of the community:

- Economic Development
- Education
- Crime Prevention
- Cultural & Recreational Opportunities
- Housing<sup>80</sup>

Subcommittees were formed to address issues under each of these areas. The Crime Prevention committee sighted both strengths and weaknesses of the area, and gave strategies to address those in need of improvement. Some of these included expansion of the community policing concept throughout the Police Department; priority attention to programs such as Neighborhood Crime Watch, Help End Auto Theft or "H.E.A.T."; Child I.D.; and expansion of drug abuse resistance programs, such as "D.A.R.E. to every grade in school."<sup>81</sup>

For communities interested in organizing similar efforts, the National Crime Prevention Council's booklet entitled, Helping Communities Mobilize Against Crime, Drugs, and Other Problems offers advice on how to start, sustain, and renew such efforts.

## V. LEGAL/REGULATORY CHANGE

Laws or rules may lower the risk of violent behavior. Some regulations that would help reduce injuries and deaths from violence have already been enacted, but many are neither widely known nor well enforced. In many cases, it is easier to enforce existing laws than it is to enact new laws. In other cases, existing regulations are inadequate and new ones are needed.

The success of making or enforcing rules depends on the willingness of the population to support and obey the rules and the ability of regulatory agencies, such as the police, to enforce them. Examples of laws or rules intended to reduce injuries and deaths from violence include laws prohibiting the carrying of firearms in school areas, and rules preventing the wearing of gang colors in schools.<sup>82</sup>

### V. A. USE OF AND ACCESS TO WEAPONS

Guns, knives, and other dangerous weapons may not actually cause violence, but they can change an argument without injuries into one with severe injuries, or even death. Youth and guns often are a fatal combination. The use of firearms has dramatically increased the prevalence of violent death and the severity of violent injury to America's youth.<sup>83</sup>



The firearm death rate among teenagers, age 15 -19, increased 77 percent from 1985 to 1990.<sup>84</sup> In 1991, 26% of the student population reported they had carried a weapon at least once in the last thirty days.<sup>85</sup> Another study by researchers at Texas A&M University found that 1.6 percent of students surveyed reported that they bring a gun to school everyday.<sup>86</sup> Most communities have existing laws and regulations concerning the sale, ownership, use, or carrying of firearms or other weapons. Nevertheless, children and youth in America generally have a widespread, easy and unsupervised access to firearms, with little opportunity to learn how to prevent firearm violence.

A variety of strategies have been used to reduce the likelihood that weapons will be used. In most schools, students are prohibited from bringing weapons on campus. Methods used for enforcement include; requiring students to carry books in see-through bags rather than solid cloth cases in which weapons can be hidden; random locker searches; not allowing the wearing of clothing in which weapons could be hidden easily; or metal-detector checks at the school entrance, or other selected sites in the school.

Some cities prohibit carrying firearms within their city limits or carrying a concealed weapon. Legislation that increased the penalty for disobeying this law in one state was apparently effective in reducing the number of homicides and assaults with guns. In the two year period following the passage of the Massachusetts Bartley-Fox Act, the incidence of assaults with guns was reduced by 13.5 percent.<sup>87</sup>

Other laws restrict the possession of particular types of guns, such as handguns, or automatic firearms except to the police or individuals who obtain a special permit in order to own them. Also, the recently enacted Brady bill requires a five day waiting period before a handgun may be purchased, but some states exceed this period with their own laws. For example, Tennessee has a 15 day waiting period, and Massachusetts requires a buyer to have a permit-to-purchase for forty days before being allowed to purchase any guns.<sup>88</sup>

#### V. B. USE OF AND ACCESS TO ALCOHOL

Antonia Novella, M.D., Surgeon General of the Public Health Service stated,

."Crime is one of the major consequences of alcohol consumption.  
Alcohol may give people a false courage to commit crimes."<sup>89</sup>

It appears alcohol does play an important role in many violent situations. Youth who have been drinking are more likely to become involved in physical fights. In all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia, the minimum drinking age is now 21 years of age. This regulation appears to have little effect in preventing youth from obtaining alcohol, as a 1992 survey shows that 51.3% of the high school seniors questioned indicated they had alcoholic beverages to drink within the last thirty days.<sup>90</sup>

The sale of alcohol to underage youth may be limited by stricter enforcement of laws. As a general rule, regulations are most poorly followed in convenience stores. Locations that often violate the regulations are often known by the local residents, and can be targeted by law enforcement. The police are much more likely to take the time to enforce the laws if they have strong community support to do so.

Keg-labeling laws can be established. Liquor stores can be required to increase the deposit and to place a numbered band on beer kegs. The band identifies the purchaser, making it possible to trace and prosecute people who supply kegs to underage drinkers.<sup>91</sup>

Clubs and organizations that sponsor entertainment events can prohibit the consumption of alcohol on the premises. They can also refuse to admit youth that have been drinking.

All states now have laws about the liability of alcohol servers for injuries caused by their patrons who have had too much to drink. These laws can be publicized, better-enforced, and if necessary, strengthened.

## VI. CRIME PREVENTION

"Crime prevention is everybody's business"; is a statement often made throughout the law enforcement profession. Unfortunately, many officers feel that crime prevention, community policing or any similar effort is not "real police work". These officers have yet to realize that what we have been doing as a profession has not been successful. They also fail to see the enormous advantage of knowing those you serve, and the trust and support the citizens are willing to give with just a little effort on our part.

Law enforcement agencies across the nation are starting to realize the need to alter their efforts not only to assist in the fight against crime, but in most cases organize and lead in this struggle as well.

Following are some of those efforts now underway by law enforcement agencies.

## VI. A. COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS

"Community Policing" is the buzz word of the 90's in the law enforcement profession. Research conducted by the National Center for Community Policing in cooperation with the FBI Academy's Behavioral Sciences Unit verified earlier findings that the majority of police departments in major jurisdictions have already adopted some form of community policing reform, or they plan to do so in the near future.<sup>92</sup>

What has created the need, or the great desire for this style of policing by both the police and citizens? A recent critique of the law enforcement profession indicated five concerns that have most strongly influenced this development:

1. The police field is preoccupied with internal procedures, management, and efficiency to the exclusion of appropriate concern for effectiveness in dealing with substantive problems.
2. The police devote most of their resources to responding to calls from citizens, reserving too small a percentage of their time and energy for acting on their own initiative to prevent or reduce community problems.
3. The community is a major resource with an enormous potential, largely untapped, for reducing the number and magnitude of problems that otherwise become the business of the police.
4. Within their agencies, police have readily available to them another huge resource: their rank-and-file officers, whose time and talent have not been used effectively.
5. Efforts to improve policing have often failed because they have not been adequately related to the overall dynamics and complexity of the police organization. Adjustments in organizational structure and policies are required to accommodate and support change.<sup>93</sup>

Adding confusion to this issue is the problem of defining community policing. There are as many definitions as there are programs, but one of the more concise definitions was offered by the late Dr. Robert Trojanowicz, in his book, Community Policing, How to Get Started:

"Community Policing is a philosophy of full service personalized policing, where the same officer patrols and works in the same area on a permanent basis, from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and solve problems."<sup>94</sup>

This definition is followed by many departments in their attempts to implement or administer community policing. For example, the Boca Raton, Florida Police Department's Neighborhood Improvement Program started by Officer Wayne Barton. Officer Barton is assigned to the Dixie Manor Housing Project, a primarily black and Hispanic housing project for low to no-income level families. Since his assignment, Officer Barton has been successful in improving the physical appearance of the neighborhood by holding clean up days, conducting his own "war on drugs," and activities or youth and adults to help minimize the effects of living in a disadvantaged environment.<sup>95</sup> Dixie Manor was home to more than 50 known drug dealers when the program started, and two years later, drug activity was reduced by 95%! Barton has made over 36 drug arrests in one month, and his presence alone has discouraged drug sales. Due to his efforts, Barton has turned the image of the police as an enemy into an ally. Before he arrived, drug dealers were the models for the community, and police responding to calls were frequently met with showers of rocks and insults. For his efforts, Officer Wayne Barton was chosen Police Officer of the Year in 1988 by Parade Magazine.<sup>96</sup>

Another community policing effort recognized for its' success is the "Partnership for Progress" project of the Grandview, Missouri Police Department. This project received the 1993 Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. This project includes:

- Foot patrols in high crime and business areas
- Development of a landlord association
- Resurgence of the neighborhood watch program
- Advertisement of available police presentations
- Implementation of H.E.A.T. (Help End Auto Theft)
- Development of a Citizens' Police Academy
- Crime Prevention Newsletter
- Displays and information booths at civic events
- Implementation of D.A.R.E. along with its expansion into Jr. High
- Weekly press releases on crime statistics, and safety tips.<sup>97</sup>

As to the success of Grandview's project, overall crime decreased an astounding 32.8% in 1992 from 1991, after the first year!<sup>98</sup>

#### VI. B. DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION, "D.A.R.E."

In 1983, the Los Angeles Police Department recognized that, to prevent substance use among children, they would need the cooperation of their School District. The police department collaborated with the Superintendent of the School District to launch a prevention education program that utilized law enforcement officers in elementary classrooms as regular instructors.<sup>99</sup>

A curriculum was developed to include lessons on techniques for resisting peer pressure, on self-management skills (decision-making, value clarification, and problem-solving), and on alternatives to drug use. These methods were used to challenge students to consider the consequences of their actions and involving them in

classroom exercises that gave them the opportunity to practice what they had learned. During D.A.R.E.'s first year, 1983-84, ten officers taught more than 8,000 students in 50 Los Angeles elementary schools. Since that time, the program which originally targeted fifth or sixth grades, was expanded to include a junior high curriculum and lessons for K - 4 grade.<sup>100</sup>

The D.A.R.E. program targets children at an age when they are most receptive to drug prevention education and before they are likely to have been led by their peers to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. D.A.R.E. seeks to prevent adolescent substance abuse, thus reducing the demand side of drugs. These objectives are achieved by carefully selecting veteran law enforcement officers to teach a structured, sequential curriculum in the schools.<sup>101</sup>

Officers from all 50 states have now been trained as D.A.R.E. officers to offer the program in their communities. The Bureau of Justice Assistance now provides funds for five regional training centers across the nation. In Texas, training is available through the Texas DARE Institute, an element of the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, located at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.<sup>102</sup>

A most important side effect of D.A.R.E. is the impact made by uniformed officers working in the classrooms. These officers are positive role models for children in a non-threatening environment. Many long and trusting friendships are developed between the D.A.R.E. officers and the students.

## VI. C. CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, "CPTED" theories contend that architects, city planners, interior and landscape designers, and law enforcement can create a climate of safety in a community, right from the start.<sup>103</sup> CPTED's goal is to prevent crime through designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior: people who use the area regularly perceive it as safe, and would-be criminals see the area as a highly risky place to commit crimes.<sup>104</sup>

Studies demonstrate that certain types of environments, such as high-rise buildings, poorly lighted areas, and heavily trafficked areas, tend to discourage informal social contacts, and raise the fear of crime. In contrast, the presence of community centers and well maintained parks, even in high-density areas, increase social contacts and foster natural surveillance.

CPTED builds on four key strategies:

- **Territoriality** - people protect what they feel is their own.
- **Natural Surveillance** - criminals don't want to be seen.
- **Activity Support** - legitimate activity in public spaces helps discourage crime.
- **Access Control** - properly located entrances, exits, landscaping and lights discourage crime.<sup>105</sup>

CPTED works best when integrated into a comprehensive crime prevention program. Some states, such as Virginia, now require that master plans for all colleges include CPTED.<sup>106</sup> This mandate was the outcome of two state task forces that examined the problems of sexual assault on college campuses.



Similar requirements addressing a number of potential or existing crime problems are sure to evolve throughout the construction and building industry.

#### VI. D. CITIZENS ON PATROL

Perhaps one of the most unique programs in existence today is the "Citizens on Patrol" or "COPs" program. These programs are emerging throughout the nation, and for the most part have been very successful in deterring crime. Citizen volunteers are trained and equipped by their local law enforcement agency to serve as "eyes and ears" to alert the agency of any suspicious or criminal activity. The effort began as an extension of the neighborhood or block crime watch effort. The difference between the two is that with the "COPs" program the citizens are indeed on patrol, either in a vehicle or on foot.

The Fort Worth Police Department began its "COPs" program in October of 1991, and after one year in place, the city saw a reduction in crime. The city's rate for major crimes dropped 13% compared to the previous year, and the neighborhoods with citizen's patrols saw a decrease of 24%! <sup>107</sup>

The program began when 200 citizens answered a call from police for volunteers. They were trained for four days on how the Police Department works and how to spot and report suspicious activities. Citizens patrol and report activity to the police through their own citizen dispatcher located at the local district station, or from the citizen's home. They are equipped with radios supplied by the Department, and some cases are supplied with cellular telephones as well. Emphasis is placed on being nonconfrontational, and rules exist to disqualify citizens who violate this provision.

In addition to radios, citizens are supplied uniform caps, shirts, and windbreakers identifying them as members of the patrol, which has been designated as "Code Blue".<sup>108</sup>

The program has been so popular that the police have trouble keeping up with the demand for training and resources. By November 1992, over 700 citizens were trained through the program, and approximately 70% have remained active participants.<sup>109</sup>

The program builds a partnership between the citizens and police, and those skeptical of its initial success, now admit it is a worthwhile effort. The basic philosophy of this program is that it increases the criminal's perception of being seen, so they move to another area where they feel detection is less likely.<sup>110</sup>

## **VII.** **CONCLUSION**

This project has provided information on the many different efforts underway to combat youth crime. One must realize that success of community prevention efforts comes from focused efforts, shared vision, local adaptation, and local problem-solving. It comes from the realization that it is not necessarily the business we do, but the way we do business that makes a community effort successful. Success requires style, ownership, attitude, and logic that seek to build and sustain a functional community in which the needs of all ages are met, in which people share values, and agree on basic rules they will enforce, and in which both formal and informal institutions renew and reinforce people's commitment to each other and the community.

Success is possible, and the cost in dollar terms is not high, especially when compared with the costs of allowing crime to continue. Success has benefits beyond the reduction of crime and violence. It restores the community, builds alliances, develops new friendships, and solves problems. Most of all, it's the only answer that avoids the pain and fear of crime in favor of the glow of community health!

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