

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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The Impact of After School Programs on Juvenile Crime

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

In the recent past, our nation has seen an insurgence of juvenile crime. These crimes have become more heinous in nature and society finds itself in a dilemma about how to deal with the situation. The question is no longer what is society to do with these youths once they have entered the criminal justice system, but how are we going to keep them from getting there in the first place.

In review of such incidents of crime, it has been documented that most of the felonious crimes such as rape, robbery, and felony assaults, committed by juveniles, are occurring between the hours of 3:00PM and 6:00PM. It is no consequence that these are the hours directly following school dismissal. These are also the hours most critical, when juveniles also become victims of crime.

Building more juvenile facilities to incarcerate these youths is not proving to be an answer to the problem. Children raised in the juvenile system are more likely to continue criminal and antisocial behavior, once released from incarceration. The answer must be held in implementing a proactive approach to dealing with juveniles before the crimes are committed.

Risk factors have been identified in those who are disposed to getting involved in a life of crime. It is important that whatever solution is used, addresses those risks and provides viable alternatives.

The following information is a result of statistical research and surveys, in an effort to determine whether after school programs have an impact on juvenile crime. The measure of success of these programs are based in the reduction of crimes committed by youth in areas where programs are an option.

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INTRODUCTION

Young people have always been a precious resource; they are indeed the promise of the future. In the year 2003, changes in family structure and support systems for juveniles as a whole, has seen a breakdown, causing an increase in not only the amount of juvenile crime but also the nature of the crime. The term “juvenile crime” has changed in the past thirty years, when juvenile crimes consisted of petty theft and criminal mischief. Today juvenile crime has become more violent and heinous than ever with organized gang activity, increased instances of alcohol and drug abuse leading to criminal in recorded history. Recent school shootings, behavior, are all becoming increased concerns of communities and law enforcement. These are issues that must be addressed by society. According to Dr. James Alexander, (Personal communication, July 9, 2001) locking juveniles in prisons has not proven to be a successful remedy and a more proactive approach is needed.

In a study adapted from Development Research Programs, Inc., Communities That Care: Risk Focused Prevention Using the Social Development Strategy- An Approach to Reducing Adolescent Problem Behavior, Seattle WA: Development Research Program, Inc. 1993, it was revealed that the majority of juvenile offenders have been exposed to certain risk factors. (Morley, E., Rossman,S., Kopezynski, M., Buck, J., Gouvis, C., 2000 November) Four of these risk factors include non-supervision during critical hours, (after school hours), poor school performance, lack of commitment to school, and no positive adult role models. It is important to examine alternatives to these risk factors.

Programs designed to increase pro-social bonding; opportunities for meaningful involvement, skill building, and rewards for positive contributions contribute to decrease those risk factors. It is important to provide programs, which appeals not only to the sports inclined youth but also provide optional interest in activities. Programs that offer a wide spectrum of interest can provide outlets for those at risk students which otherwise might not be reached. After school programs can provide critical protective factors for at risk youth. They can provide supervision during the critical hours of 3pm and 6pm, on school days. Violent crimes by juveniles are typically committed in after school hours between 2:30PM and 8:30 PM (Snyder H., and Sickmund H., 1995). It can also provide assistance with school- work through mentoring programs and provide positive adult role models. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship of after school program to juvenile crime.

The research question that will guide this study is: Do after school programs have an impact on the reduction of juvenile crimes? It is hypothesized that findings will show that there is a decrease in juvenile crime when after school programs are utilized. Methods of research will include surveys to law enforcement, collection of data through periodicals, books, and the Internet.

The implications of this study will include the importance of funding for school programs in the way of new grants, partnering with multiple organizations and staffing allotted those programs. It will illustrate clearly, not only a benefit to law enforcement, but to the schools and community as a whole.

It is the anticipated findings of this research paper to show clearly, after school programs can provide a safety haven and provides for a crime deterrent to those children

with no supervision in the critical hours following school. The results of this paper will help to encourage funding and organizational development of these programs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to understand the relationship between a decrease in juvenile crime and after school programs, it becomes important to examine reasons for juvenile crime. As mentioned previously, it has been explored that juvenile offenders display identifiable risk factors. Risk factors can be divided into four categories. Those categories include community, family, school and individual. Some of the risk factors identified in the community include; availability to drugs and firearms, media portrayal of violence, instability in residence including transition and mobility, low neighborhood attachment, community disorganization and extreme economic deprivation. Some of the risk factors identified in the category of family include: history of problem behavior, family management problems, family conflict, and favorable parental attitudes toward and involvement in the problem behavior. School risk factors include early and persistent antisocial behavior, academic failure beginning early in academic career, and a lack of commitment to school. Individual risk factors include alienation and rebelliousness, friends who engage in problem behavior, early initiation of the problem behavior.

As well as risk factors that contribute to the predisposition of juvenile offenders, there are also protective factors that can be identifiable to alleviate those risk factors. Using the same categories, protective factor for community include clear and consistent standard for pro-social behavior that are frequently communicated. Family protective factors include healthy beliefs, and second clear and consistent standards for pro social

behavior. School protective factors include involvement in after school programs designed to provide consistent and supportive care systems. Individual protective factors include pro social bonding with family members as well as adults outside the family and low risk peers. Also included are opportunities for meaningful involvement in positive activities, skill building, and rewards for positive contributions. The question becomes how can after school programs make an impact on these risk and protective factors thereby reducing juvenile crime.

Everyone sits watching the big clock in the classroom. The magic hour finally arrives and millions of children and teens pour out into the streets with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision. Violent crimes including murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults, suddenly triple (FBI National Incident Based Reporting System 1997). These are also the hours when teens are more likely to become victims of violent crimes, involved in car crashes, killed by household or other accidents, and involvement with smoking, alcohol and drugs.

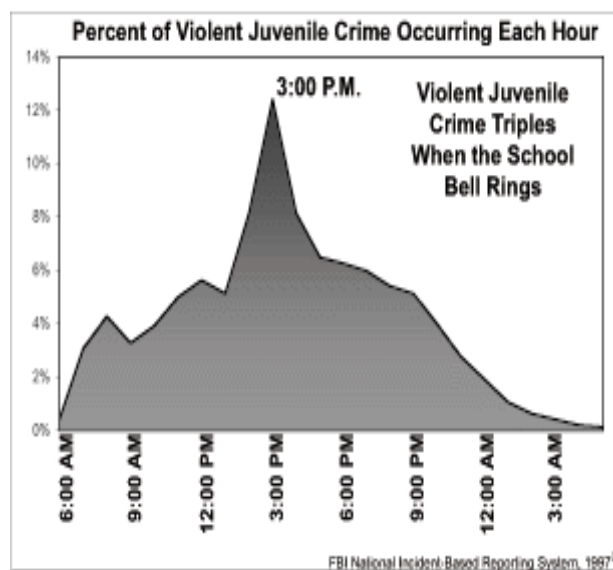


Figure 1 (Fight Crime Invest in Kids, 2000)

In 1998, 70.2 million Americans, more than 1 in 4 were under the age of 18. Although the juvenile population is growing at a slower rate than other segments of the population, between 1995 and 2015 the population of persons under age 18 is expected to increase 8%. The population of juvenile minorities will experience the most growth between 1995 and 2015. The number of black juveniles is expected to increase 19%, Native American juveniles 17% and Asian/Pacific Islander juveniles 74%, while white juveniles will increase 3%. Juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity are expected to increase 59% during this same period. 4(Snyder,H, Sickmund, H. ,1999)

Because these minorities are less likely to have accessibility to organized after school activities, it is important that after school programs target these minorities groups.

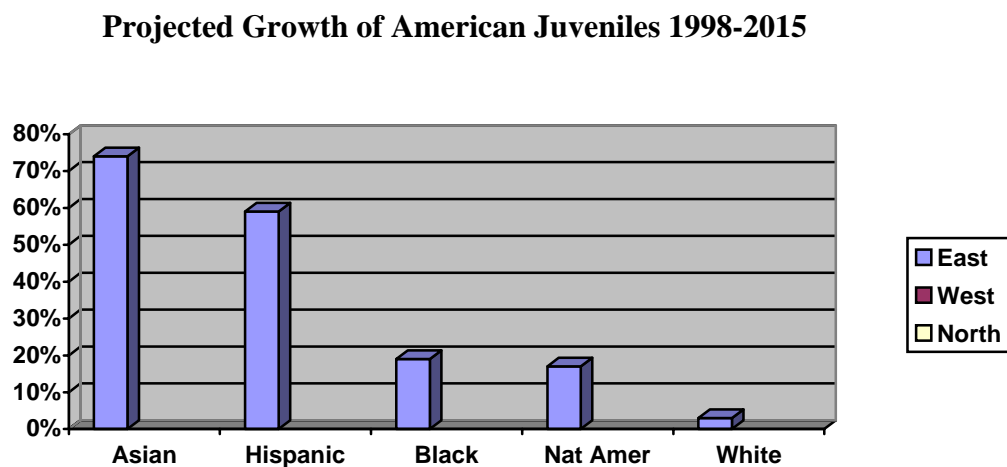


Figure 2

Being unsupervised after school is substantially more likely to result in behavior problems for low-income children than those from middle to high-income homes.

Children of higher educated parents with a high income, are more likely to have more

options available in after school recreation than those of economically challenged, uneducated parents (Hofferth, S.L., Jankuniene, L., 2000 April).

Out of school time programs can provide important opportunities for low-income children. Formal after-school programs have helped low income children develop social skills and learn to get along with their peers, (Possner, J.K., Vandell D.L. 1994) attributes that are strongly associated with school achievement, adult success, and reduced risk of juvenile delinquency and crime (Miller, B.M., O'Conner, S., Sirgiano, S., Joshi, P. 1996) After school programs have such an impact because they can provide both a safe haven/control effect and a values/skills effect.

Children and especially adolescents crave excitement and activities with their peers. If they cannot find it in organized programs with responsible adults to supervise, they will find it with peers more likely to be associated in risky behaviors. Adolescents with no positive support system are more likely to fall target to gangs. Gangs appear to provide protections but in reality increase the likelihood and crime involvement. Research shows that adolescents generally begin hanging out with gangs at the age of 12-13 and actually join by the age of 13-14 years of age (Huff, C., 1998 October). Their first actual criminal behavior committed began at the age of 14 (Wiebe, D., Meeker, J., 1998).

After school programs can provide positive experiences, which can have enormous and lasting effects on the attitudes, skills and values of adolescents. Academic support means improved grades, which in turn can provide for higher self - esteem, more choices in future and importance of working hard and being responsible. Perhaps the most valuable asset to these programs is to provide adolescents with caring and

responsible adults, a protective factor which is one of the strongest protections in anti criminal behaviors.

More than seven school age children in every 10 are in households where both parents work or are one parent household where the parent works. In 69% of all married couple families with school aged children 6 to 17, both parents work outside the home. In 71% of single mother families and 85% of single-father families with children ages 6 to 17, the custodial parent is working outside the home (Bureau of Labor and Statistics 1998). Being able to offer an alternative to staying at home alone, or being with friends unsupervised provides a great number of benefits.

Exploring those program which have proven to work, is very important. There are many programs out there but which ones actually make a difference? What components do they have that make them more successful? One such program is the Opportunities Industrialization Center Quantum Opportunities Program. In this program, randomly selected high school freshmen from low-income families in four cities were invited to participate in an intensive after school enrichment program. This program combined academics, personal development, community service and monetary incentives to keep students on a path to high school graduation and adult productivity. It was found that boys that participated in this program were one-sixth as likely to be convicted of a crime during their high school years and the boys that left the program. Boys and girls were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half more likely to further education after high school (R. Taggart, 1995).

The Coca Cola Valued Youth Development Program increases the self-esteem and school success of at risk middle and high school students by placing them in

positions of responsibility as tutors of younger students. Only 1% of the kids in the program dropped out of school, compared to 12% of kids in a control group (Cardenas, J.A. 1999). Boys and Girls Club also conducted a study of five housing project in which new Boys and Girls Clubs were set up to five housing projects which had no clubs, and to five others with previously established clubs. Levels of vandalism were initially equal in the projects without the clubs and the new clubs. Vandalism in the housing project with established clubs were experienced significantly lower incidents.

When asked how they would curb violence-involving youth, most people have one of two solutions. One side of the coin embraces to decrease juvenile crime society needs to get more tough on crime, including more severe penalties and incarceration. Although recently the move has been to de-institutionalize children, more than 53,000 children are incarcerated in state facilities with many more in long-term local facilities (Sickmund, Snyder, and Poe Yamagata, 1997). Most persistent and violent predatory offenders who terrorize their communities are frequently “state raised” children previously placed in juvenile institutions. (Chaiken,J, Chaiken, M. 1982) Boot camps are also popular but have shown very little or no effect on delinquency rates unless combined with community based approaches. (Mackenzie, D. Cowley, E. Castellano, T., 1995)

The other side of the coin includes a more proactive approach. Those embracing this approach are in favor of more education, supervised recreation, and long-term continuous approaches. Those approaches include adults as mentors that can teach self-empowerment, self esteem building concepts, and investment in community. Those who deal most directly with the investigation and prosecution of juvenile crime including

police chiefs, sheriffs, and district attorneys have expressed their opinions on the most effective way of dealing with deterring juvenile crime.

In a poll conducted for the organization, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, by George Mason University Professors Stephen Mastrofski and Scott Keeter, in which 855 Chiefs were surveyed, from a sample including all 255 Chiefs from cities over 10,000 and a random sample of 600 Chiefs serving smaller cities 566 responded to the survey (66%), and the margin of error was 5%. The survey was conducted from October 14th through the 27th, 1999. Four questions were asked: Question number 1 asked “ Which of these statements comes closer to your view?’ Statements: 1) Expanding after school programs and educational childcare programs like Head Start would greatly reduce crime and violence. 2) Expanding after school programs and education childcare programs like Head Start would have little impact on youth crime and violence. The response showed the 86% of the Polices polled felt it would greatly reduce youth crime and violence. Only 14% responded it would have little impact on youth crime and violence.

The second question asked: Which of these strategies do you think is most effective? (1) provide more after-school programs and educational child care programs, (2) prosecute more juveniles as adults, (3) hire more police officers to investigate juvenile crimes, (4) install more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools. Of the Police Chiefs polled, 69% responded providing more after school and education child care programs were the most effective, 17% felt prosecuting juveniles as adults was most effective, 13% felt hiring more police officers to investigate juvenile crimes was most effective and only 1% responded more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools were most effective.

The third question asked which of these statements comes closer to your view?

(1) If America does not make greater investments in after-school programs and education child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later, in crime, welfare, and other costs. (2) If America makes greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs, the cost of these programs will not be worth the payoff later. The Police Chiefs response concluded 91% believed without after school programs and educational programs society would pay more later. Only 9% stated the investment would not be worth the pay off later.

The fourth question asked the Police Chiefs to rate the following strategies, on a scale of 1 to 5 on their value as crime prevention tool. The response was the percentage for each strategy that showed a “1” rating. Metal detectors received 4%, building more juvenile detention centers received 7%, prosecuting more juveniles as adults received 14%, early child hood education received 49%, and parent coaching for high-risk families received 53%. After school and summer youth programs received a 57%.

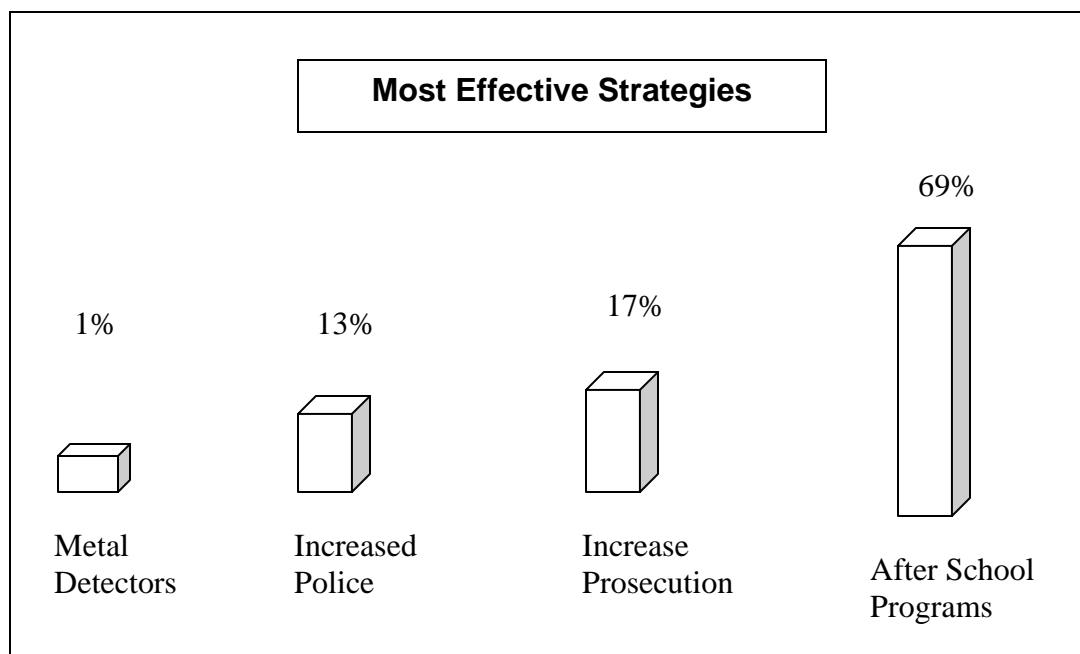


Figure 3

Crime Reduction Strategies

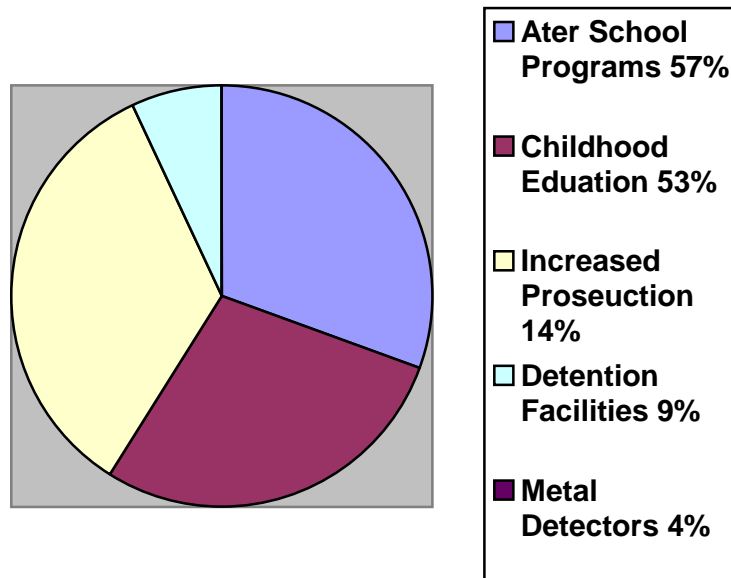


Figure 4

From February 22nd through March 3rd of 2000, the same survey was presented to New York Law Enforcement leaders, including 296 Chiefs of departments with 10 or more officers, 57 Sheriffs and 61 district attorneys for New York. A total of 218 law enforcement leaders responded for a percentage rate of 53%; 165 Chiefs, 25 District Attorneys, and 28 Sheriffs. 24 of the 296 Chiefs had responded earlier to the survey held in 1999. The response of this survey showed in response to question #1, 88% of those surveyed believed after school programs and education programs would greatly reduce crime an increase of 2% of the original survey. There was a 12% response that these strategies would have little impact on youth.

The answer to question number two, on strategies that are more effective, showed 74% of those polled believed after school programs and childcare educational programs were most effective. This is an increase of 5% from the original poll. Prosecuting more

juveniles as adults dropped from 17% in the original poll to 10% in the second poll.

Hiring more officers to investigate juvenile crime increased from 13% in the original poll to 15% in the second poll. More metal detectors and surveillance cameras remained at 1%.

Question number three on whether investing more in after school programs and educational childcare would pay more later or not be worth the payoff later. 93% of those polled agreed the investment would pay more later. 7% reflected that the pay these strategies would not be the pay off later.

Question number four, ranking order of effectiveness of various strategies, 63% of the participants showed after school and summer youth programs to be most effective, 50% believed parent coaching for high risk families was most effective. Early childhood education as a strategy received 46%, prosecuting more juveniles as adults, received 15%. More juvenile detention centers received 8%, while use of metal detectors received 7%.

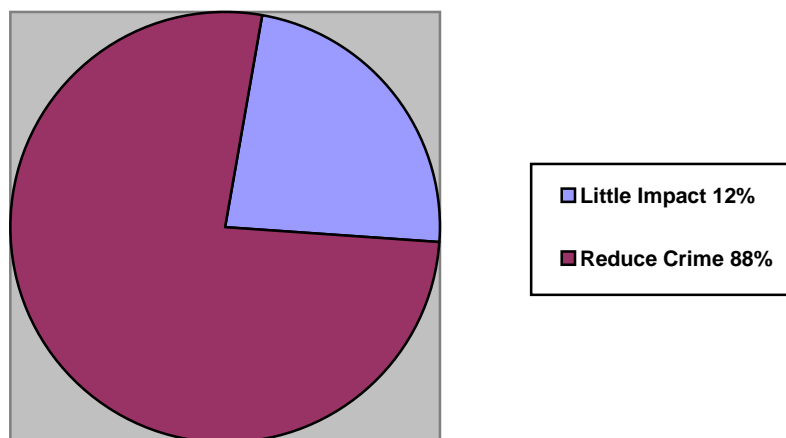


Figure 5

Both polls clearly showed, that of those surveyed, after school programs were the most valuable tools to combat youth violence. Money spent on after school youth programs were a good investment and would pay off not only now, but also in the future.

METHADODOLOGY

Juveniles growing up in today's society are facing more options than ever before. Through fast pace society, the Internet, and a world surrounding them in glorified violence they continue to have to face issues of morality and risky behaviors. After school programs containing elements, which address these issues, are most valuable. The hypothesis of this research paper is to establish the relationship between after school programs and its effect on juvenile crime. The expected outcome is after school programs will attribute to the decrease in juvenile crime. The method of research to identify successful programs which do provide a positive impact on juvenile crime; included sources of information gathered from articles, journals, books, the internet, and periodicals. Also included in the research was a survey. The survey was submitted to a target group of 26 officers attending L.E.M.I.T. Module II in Denton, Texas held between July 15 and 27, 2001. All the officers were first line supervisors. Agencies that were represented were scattered through out the state of Texas and were varying sizes from (1,320) sworn personnel to (1) sworn person. There were (26) surveys returned; however (1) disqualified for answering questions with several answers.

The survey consisted of a written questionnaire containing (6) questions were submitted to each participant. All questions were asked to reflect the opinion of the officer taking the survey. The first question asked the officer to choose where most juvenile crimes occurred in his or her community, on campus or off campus. The second

question asked the officer to rank (5) misdemeanor crimes committed by juveniles, which occur most often off campus. The crimes were ranked in order of frequency, and were listed as theft, criminal mischief, assault, public intoxication and disorderly conduct. The third question asked officer to select at time of the day do most juvenile crimes occur, 2PM to 4PM, 6PMto10PM, 10PM to12PM, and 12PM to 6AM. The fourth question asked the officer to rank the greatest deterrent of juvenile crime. The (4) choices included more severe penalties, making parents more accountable through fines, after school programs, and after school programs mentored by police officers. The fifth question was a two-part question. The first asked if the officer's city had a juvenile curfew. The second part asked the officer if he or she felt the curfew decreased juvenile crime. The sixth question asked the officer which had the most effect on juvenile crime, reactive measures or proactive measures.

FINDINGS

Although many articles, studies and publications were found, there were some very key elements of successful programs, which were established. First, it was recognized that there were identifiable factors in dealing with those juveniles most prone to juvenile crime. Those were identified as risk factors. The risk factors could be divided into three categories; community, family, school, and individual. Factors included low income, exposure to drugs and firearms, no community ties, family conflict, little or no parental involvement, early antisocial behavior, academic failure, lack of commitment, and peers who engaged in problematic behavior. There were also identifiable protective

factors, which included positive and interactive adult mentoring, activities, which included skill building, positive reinforcement, and rewards for positive contributions.

Time was a factor in the study of serious felony crimes committed by juveniles. F.B.I. statistics showed that most serious violent crimes were committed in the hours between 2:30PM and 8:30PM, with most crimes occurring around 3:00PM. This is the time when most schools are dismissed for the day. It was shown that those felony crimes almost tripled at this time of the day.

Although the juvenile population is increasing less than any other segment of the population, the projected growth of juveniles shows that the minority population including Asians and Hispanics are growing more and more rapidly. Often minorities do not have the same opportunities as those more affluent. Those growing up in socio-economically depressed areas are also more likely to be left alone unsupervised in those critical after school hours.

Juveniles also crave excitement, if they are unable to find it in a supervised, safe environment, they will seek it elsewhere in risky behaviors. Juveniles can fall target to gangs. Gangs can appear to provide positive support and protections but in reality those involved easily fall prey as victims or become involved in criminal behaviors.

Three successful programs were examined: Opportunities Center Quantum Opportunities Program, Coca Cola Valued Youth Development Program, and Boys and Girls Club. Each of these programs displayed key elements in a successful after school program. Programs included academics, personal development, community service, adult mentoring, monetary incentives, and older students mentoring younger students.

Locking away juvenile criminals has not proven to help deter juvenile crime. Although over 53,000 juveniles have been incarcerated by the state no significant decrease in juvenile crime has occurred. Most persistent and predatory offenders who terrorize their communities are frequently “state raised” children. Reactive measures such as incarceration does not appear to be the key to decrease.

A poll conducted of Police Chiefs, District Attorneys, and Sheriffs showed that a high percentage of those surveyed believed that expanded school programs and childcare programs would greatly reduce juvenile crime and violence, was the most effective strategy in reducing juvenile crime. They also reflected in the poll the investing of more money in after school programs would pay off in the future, and that the most effective crime prevention tool in deterring juvenile crimes was more after school programs.

In July of 2001 representatives of 26 different Texas law enforcement agencies spread out geographically among many areas of the state were asked to participate in a survey to determine facets of juvenile crime and the most productive way to approach decreasing that crime. Of the 26 surveys issued, 25 responses were received. Roughly, 76% of those responding stated that most juvenile crime took place off campus, while 24% responded that it took place on campus. When asked what the most frequent crimes committed by juveniles 36% agreed criminal mischief was most prevalent while 20% stated disorder conduct offenses not including public intoxication. 16% stated thefts, another 16% stated public intoxication, with 12% stating simple assault. The survey reflected the times crimes most likely committed by juveniles, 20% stated 2p-6p, 44% stated 6p-10p, 20% 10P-12P and 16% 12P-6A.

Officer were questioned as to what was the greatest deterrent of juvenile crime

20% reflected more severe penalties, 40% said making parents more accountable, 12% reflected after school programs, while 32% said after school programs mentored by police officers were most effective.

When asked whether or not a juvenile curfew help to decrease crime 76% stated yes while 24% stated no. When questioned as to which approach was more effective, proactive or reactive, to addressing juvenile crime, 96% stated a proactive approach was needed as opposed to 4% who believed a reactive approach was most effective.

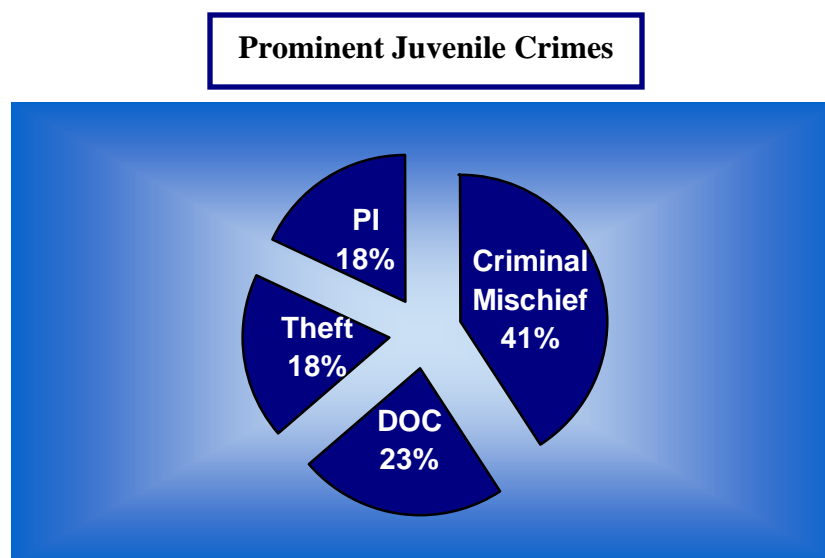


Figure 6

**Hours of Occurrence for
Juvenile Misdemeanor Crimes**

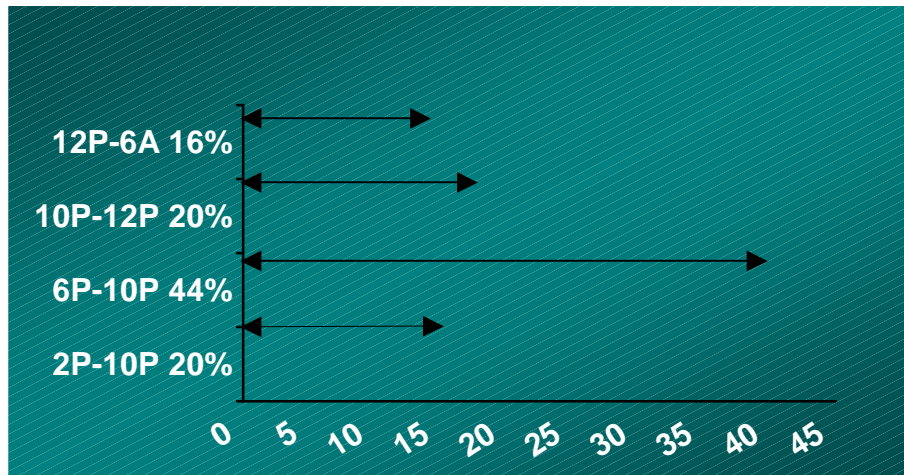


Figure 7

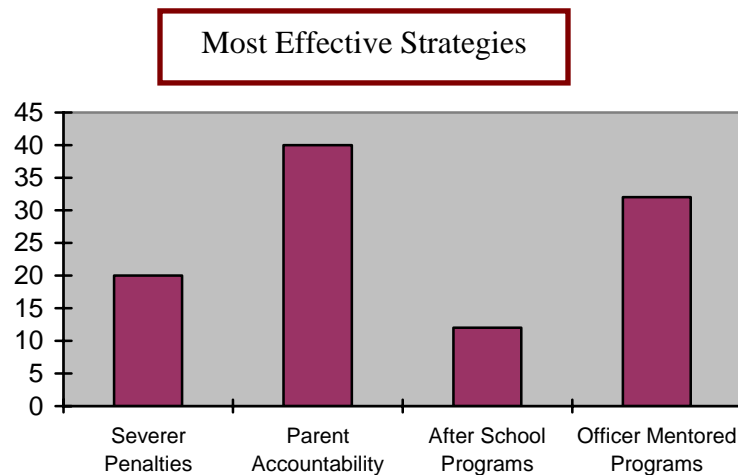


Figure 8

CONCLUSION

Juveniles growing up in this millennium will be faced with challenges and choices as no other generation before them. The increase of both parents being employed outside the home and the increase of single parent household lends to the trend of more and more “latchkey” children. Those children who are unsupervised after the school doors close are more apt to face certain risks factors. Lack of supervision, increases the likelihood of them either becoming victims of crime or committing crimes. As stated by Dr. Marissa

Reddy, Chief Research Psychologist, and Researcher for the National Threat Assessment Center, “Children who are not connected to family or community are four times more likely to be involved in criminal activity.” (Personal communication, Marissa Reddy, PhD, 2002 May). The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between after-school programs and a resulted decrease in juvenile crime. The hypothesis was that by keeping students involved in those critical hours following school, would decrease the amount of criminal activity.

By viewing juvenile crime in a reactive mode, the only answer would be to build more and more juvenile facilities to lock offenders away. This will serve no more purpose as does adult prisons where recidivism rates sore. Juveniles must be offered a hope of tomorrow and an alternative to the violent based society in which we live. A proactive approach is the only responsible way to deal with juvenile crime.

It is interesting to note also in the survey that was conducted of LEMIT participants that the majority of the participants felt that making the parents more responsible for the juvenile offender was the most effective way to deal with decreasing juvenile crime. This being a reactive measure to the offending behavior, however; an overwhelming percentage answered that the most effective way of dealing with juvenile criminal behavior was in a proactive way.

Juvenile crime statistics could actually reflect an increase in crime. Students who form a relationship with police officers stationed on campus such as School District Police and School Resource Officers feel more at ease reporting crimes and thus actually increasing reported crimes. Although, as reflected in the results of the survey, most juvenile crimes are misdemeanor offenses such as criminal mischief, theft and disorderly

conduct, which occur under the cloak of darkness. More and more violent crimes, rape, assaults, and murders, are occurring and are most prevalent in those hours when the school bell rings for dismissal. The fact that after school programs keep children occupied between the critical hours of 2PM and 6PM, when most violent crimes occur and most children becomes victim of violent crime make after school programs a successful tool in decreasing juvenile crime. Programs proving to have most success in decreasing juvenile crimes contain specific components. Those components included one to one mentoring, monetary incentives, social skills building, academic development and community involvement.

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Appendix 1

SURVEY

Name:_____

Date:_____

Agency:_____

Sworn Personnel _____

1. In your opinion, do most juvenile crimes, in your community, occur

_____ on campus

_____ off campus

2. In your opinion, of the crimes committed off campus, which occur most often.

(Rank in order one being least amount and 5 being most)

_____ Theft

_____ Criminal Mischief

_____ Assault

_____ P.I.

_____ D.O.C.

Appendix 1

3. In your opinion, what time of the day do most of juvenile crimes occur?

_____2p-6P

_____6P-10P

_____10P-12P

_____12P-6A

4. In your opinion, what would be the greatest deterrent to juvenile crime?

_____more severe penalties

_____making parents more accountable through fines

_____after school programs

_____after school programs mentored by police officers

5. Does your city have a juvenile curfew? _____yes _____no

If yes, in your opinion does curfew decrease juvenile crime? _____yes _____no

6. In your opinion, what has a greater effect on juvenile crime:

Reactive measures _____ Proactive measures _____