

TOPICS IN

# Crime Prevention

A series of timely reports to meet the needs of people working to build safer communities...

## Young People as Active Partners in Crime Prevention

### THIS REPORT

This report speaks to adults—law enforcement officers, teachers, government leaders, community organizers, youth workers, and others—who want to engage youth as prime players in crime prevention and community betterment. It offers statistics on juvenile crime and attitudes; summarizes the benefits of prevention programs that actively involve youth from planning through evaluation; outlines practical suggestions on program development and youth-adult roles and relationships; and identifies the four R's of successful programs. Profiles of national programs with strong youth involvement components provide both resources and models for local efforts.

A majority of teenagers—urban, rural, and suburban—say they feel most adults perceive adolescents negatively. They offer a plea to be seen as responsible, caring, principled people, individuals who should be granted the right to experiment and make mistakes as they grow from children into adults. Almost nine in ten of the teens surveyed in a 1995 Harris Poll, *Between Hope and Fear: Teens Speak Out on Crime and the Community*, stated they would get involved in programs to end violence if only they knew what to do. More than seven in ten were already participating in activities in their community. This high rate of volunteerism and commitment to community has been confirmed by a 1992 Independent Sector survey as well as evaluations of youth service efforts. Just as mood swings, erratic attention spans, and high energy are all hallmarks of adolescence, so is idealism and a thirst for commitment and recognition.

### STEREOTYPES AND STATS

How much crime is caused by juveniles? In 1994, juveniles accounted for just 14 percent of all violent crimes and 25 percent of all property crimes resolved by law enforcement. Preliminary FBI statistics for 1995 show a 2.9 percent decrease in

juvenile arrests for violent crime, the first decline since 1987.

A mistaken but commonly held view is that most crimes are committed by juveniles. Many factors contribute to this disparity between perception and reality, including the greater likelihood of juveniles to commit crimes in groups and society's shock and moral outrage when a child or adolescent turns to violence.

Youth are not just victimizers—they also are more likely to be victims of crime than any other age group. There were 111 violent victimizations for every 1,000 teenagers and young adults in 1994—more than twice the rate for men and women aged 25-49 and about 11 times higher than that for people age 50 or older.

■ Between 1988 and 1992, juvenile arrests for violent crime increased 50 percent. (National Crime Victims Survey and Uniform Crime Reports)

■ Almost one-quarter of the people arrested for weapons offenses during 1993 were under age 18. More than 9 out of 10 were males. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996)

■ As many as one in six teens admits there are places where they never feel safe, such as walking to and from a friend's house or on public transportation. (Harris Poll, 1995)

Demographers note that the next decade will see an increase in the number of teens. In the past, crime increases have accompanied that pattern. But demographics are not destiny. Why react to this emerging generation of young people with fear and despair? Instead, let us welcome them and engage them as partners, essential resources in the fight against crime and violence.

### Starting a Program That Engages the Attention and Interests of Youth

Like any program, one targeting youth should follow a basic development cycle—a process that is systematic and on-going:

1. Assessing the community's needs.
2. Planning the program.

#### A Starter List of Project Ideas

Victim/witness assistance  
 Forums and discussions  
 Preventing vandalism  
 Warm lines  
 Drug abuse prevention  
 Plays, videos, raps, puppet shows  
 Student courts  
 Escort service or check-in for senior citizens  
 Teaching  
 Home security surveys  
 Conflict resolution and mediation  
 Neighborhood Watch  
 Shoplifting prevention education  
 Community clean-ups  
 Fairs and displays  
 Summer recreation  
 Mentor peers or younger people  
 Writing, music, or art contests

### The Bottom-Line Benefits

#### Prevention Programs Involving Young People

- ▣ Reduce crime among a highly victimized population;
- ▣ Change the negative image of teenagers held by many citizens and thus encourage responsible, accountable behavior;
- ▣ Welcome youth as active partners in efforts to improve the community;
- ▣ Help reduce and solve quality-of-life crimes—litter, loitering, noise, public drunkenness, disorderly behavior, vandalism;
- ▣ Promote safer schools, where young people learn, socialize, and chart their course to maturity;
- ▣ Build channels of communication between youth and community institutions such as law enforcement, schools, government; and
- ▣ Teach young people skills needed to survive and succeed in the adult world.

3. Lining up resources.
4. Acting on the plan.
5. Nourishing, monitoring, and evaluating....and back to number one.

Within this basic cycle, experience has shown youth involvement at all stages to be a necessary ingredient for generating interest, enthusiasm, and results. The degree of involvement can vary—from adults presenting young people with a series of options in the planning stage to adolescents identifying needs and designing programs with minimal adult guidance. In all cases partnership, not paternalism, is the by-word.

#### GETTING STARTED

Whether it's a one-day park cleanup or an after school program that will run several months, the first decision to be made is "who's in charge"—how is responsibility divided between adults and teens?

And responsibility means finding and allocating resources, setting priorities, putting plans into action, overseeing progress, and resolving problems.

Certain factors can affect this decision:

- ▣ Short-term versus long-term projects
- ▣ Community-based versus school-based programs
- ▣ Local versus national sponsors
- ▣ Simple (a wall covered by graffiti) versus complex (high school drop out rates) issues addressed
- ▣ Skills and interests needed to implement a project

#### FORGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

For a program to truly benefit teens and the community, it should:

- ▣ Have a plan to attract participants and supporters.
- ▣ Involve teens at all levels of the project—planning, fundraising, carrying out the project, evaluating.

### Community Partners

Law enforcement  
Schools  
Businesses  
Print and broadcast media  
Churches and other religious organizations  
Colleges and universities  
Public housing authorities  
Service clubs  
Park and recreation departments

- Address a problem or issue perceived as important by teens.
- Offer opportunities for teens to make their own decisions and cope with the consequences.
- Include a learning component.
- Earn the community's respect.
- Promote responsibility and enhance self-esteem.
- Encourage participation of all teens, not just those who are easily motivated.
- Build on teens' need for friendship—a central theme in adolescents' daily life.

#### THE ADULT ROLE

The adult partner in any teen program will function with the least frustration and most influence by abandoning the role of director and assuming the role of mentor and resource person. The following suggestions should help in this transformation:

- Stress the collaborative nature of the program in the needs assessment and design stages.
- Move to action as quickly as possible.
- Get to know each teen in your program and listen to his or her

opinions, concerns, ideas. Assess his or her strengths, talents, and interests.

- Teach and guide teens as the program proceeds. Don't withdraw when the activities get underway, but shift as much as possible to being a participant rather than the leader.
- Help teens to secure community resources and support.
- Provide opportunities for teens to reflect on and evaluate their experiences with the program.
- Reward and recognize personal growth and other accomplishments.

- Demonstrate respect for teens' abilities and contributions.
- Be consistent in your leadership approach.

#### Prevention Programs Involving Youth

This section highlights a diverse array of national programs that provide activities, opportunities to learn leadership and other life skills, positive adult role models, community service, and a challenge for young people. Most give their local affiliates considerable autonomy to fit programs to needs. While these organizations are valuable resources, their efforts also contain ideas and

#### The Four Rs of Successful Programs

Based on a survey of more than 100 successful programs, the National Crime Prevention Council has identified four elements common to effective youth-led projects:

**Resources:** Goods, services, and support are necessary to start and sustain the program. These include an adult leader or mentor, youth involvement in identifying and solving local crime problems, support from local institutions, in-kind or cash donations to purchase supplies or operate the program, a permanent base of operation, and training for young people.

**Relationships:** Positive relationships between young people and adults are pivotal. Other important relationships include those between teens and their peers and between teens and younger people. Open, honest communication is critical.

**Responsibilities:** These will vary widely and may range from providing services to running the organization. Guidelines for setting responsibilities include: have clear rules, establish specific roles, establish and maintain high standards and expectations, and determine and use specific talents and abilities. Let young people be responsible for decision-making—allow for mistakes.

**Rewards:** Include all kinds of pay-offs for group and individual endeavors and provide motivation for participation. The rewards offered by a project influence participants' feelings about whether a program is a good investment of their time and energy.

strategies that can be adapted to prevention/youth involvement projects organized by local leaders.

### BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS

Research highlights the importance of the consistent presence of a caring adult in helping prevent juvenile delinquency and increasing school success and relationship skills. Mentors work one-on-one with young people, providing tutoring, teaching job and life skills, and doing informal counseling. Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS), the oldest and best-known mentoring program in the United States, maintains about 75,000 active matches between volunteer adults and youngsters. Adult volunteers commit to meeting with their Brother or Sister three times a month, four hours a meeting, for a year. A landmark evaluation of BBBS by Public/Private Ventures found that mentoring decreased drug use, improved academic performance, and improved family and peer relationships.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America  
230 North 13th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-665-7762

### BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Since the mid-1970s, Law Enforcement Explorers have made enormous contributions to community crime prevention. Usually organized in cooperation with a local law enforcement agency, Explorers have conducted child safety classes for children, distributed crime prevention literature in neighborhoods, provided escort services for senior citizens, helped organize and maintain neighborhood watch groups, and carried out training in drug abuse prevention strategies involving peers and adults. At its annual meeting in May 1996, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced a comprehensive crime prevention program that will give its four million members the chance to learn about crime prevention, develop and carry out community projects, and earn a new merit badge in crime prevention. Young people in each of the BSA's programs—Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Law Enforcement Explorers, and Learning for Life—can learn how to settle arguments with words not weapons, how to report crime, and how to get involved in making

neighborhoods safe. The crime prevention program will also emphasize parent-child communication in teaching self-protection skills; collaboration with national, state, and local law enforcement organizations; and grassroots activities, such as parent's nights or safety seminars, organized by local packs, troops, and posts. Because the crime prevention program provides for outreach to youth not involved in Scouting, its impact will be extended to several additional million youth.

Boy Scouts of America  
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane  
PO Box 152079  
Irving, TX 75015-2079  
214-580-2004

### BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

Boys & Girls Clubs help their members build self-esteem, acquire values, and pursue productive futures. Roughly, 1,700 clubs provide their 2.2 million members with a safe haven away from negative influences; guidance, discipline, and value modeling; constructive activities and programs; access to services; educational support; and a comprehensive violence prevention program. They achieve this through positive partnerships between young people and concerned adults. A three-year, independent study of Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing found that the clubs had significant impact on juvenile crime, drug activity, and the presence of crack cocaine. The study also found that the clubs improved the quality of life for the children and families that reside in public housing. Depending upon community resources and needs, programs and service vary from club to club. Programs often include supplement-

#### Elementary Students Create Prevention Projects

Children at Public School 163 in New York City took crime prevention into their own hands through the first-ever Youth As Resources program based in an elementary school. With funding from a New York businessman, an advisory board composed of students, teachers, and community representatives awarded small grants to classes for projects that students designed and carried out after school. Projects included creating a puppet show to teach "home alone" skills to children, publishing a directory of neighborhood stores willing to be "safe havens" for children in emergencies, and a crime prevention poster contest. Prior to YAR, students at PS 163 have helped the administrators and faculty develop a code of conduct and served as peer mediators.

tary education, health and fitness, drug abuse prevention, career counseling, teen pregnancy prevention, and arts and crafts.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
1230 West Peachtree Street, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30309-3447  
404-815-5751

#### **DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION (D.A.R.E.)**

Originally developed for fifth and sixth graders, D.A.R.E. now includes lessons on drug and violence prevention for kindergarten through senior high schools students. Classes are conducted jointly by local law enforcement officers and teachers and address resisting peer pressure, making your own decisions, and learning to cope with problems in positive ways. The D.A.R.E. curriculum is designed to equip elementary, middle, and high school students with the appropriate skills to resist substance abuse, violence, and gangs. D.A.R.E. achieves its objectives by training carefully selected law enforcement officers to teach a structured, sequential curriculum in the schools. An important by-product is the impact made by these uniformed officers as positive role models. A certified teacher is required to be present at all times as an active participant in all D.A.R.E. programs for students. Recent evaluations have confirmed D.A.R.E.'s popularity among school staff, students, parents, and the community. D.A.R.E. is operated with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.

D.A.R.E. America  
9800 La Cienega Boulevard,  
Suite 402  
Inglewood, CA 90301  
703-860-D.A.R.E.

#### **GANG RESISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (GREAT)**

This school-based program has separate curricula for elementary and middle school youth and supplements school-year activities with a summer component that is less structured and gives children an opportunity to become involved in community service. It seeks to help children set goals, have self-respect, resist peer pressures, resolve conflicts without violence, and understand how gangs and youth violence reduce the quality of their lives. The children also learn about the harmful effects of drugs on the user and his or her family and friends. Trained law enforcement officers teach the nine-session curriculum.

GREAT Program  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and  
Firearms  
PO Box 50418  
Washington, DC 20091-0418  
800-726-7070

#### **GIRL SCOUTS OF THE USA**

Girl Scouts of the USA will launch its new Violence Intervention Project in January 1997. Nine councils pilot this new violence prevention initiative through education and service projects. The councils will involve girls that are already members as well as girls who are not. Three distinct models—gang awareness, community assessment and service, and "Talking with TJ"—will be tested. The gang awareness model has its own curriculum and will be used in areas where gangs are already or are becoming a problem. The community assessment and service model will involve doing a needs assessment of the community and then developing a project to address those needs. "Talking with TJ" is a conflict resolution and team-building curriculum developed through a

#### **Youth Board Advises New Haven Police**

The New Haven, Connecticut, police chief was particularly concerned about the antagonistic relationship between police and youth and the high rate of youth crime and drug abuse when he joined the force in 1991. In response, he increased efforts to implement community policing throughout the city and established the Board of Young Adult Police Commissioners (YAPC). The YAPC's 22 elected and appointed members are between 13 and 19 years old and represent the full cross-section of the city. The group has the power to conduct meetings, research and gather data, debate issues, and prepare policy advisories on all matters concerning youth and the police. The YAPC was instrumental in New Haven's decision not to impose a curfew and has lobbied successfully to increase the capacity of residential drug treatment programs for youth, evaluated more than 100 new police recruits, and influenced the board of education to appoint a youth member.

partnership with Hallmark, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Girl Scouts of the USA. Ten- to twelve-year-old girls will be taught to deliver the curriculum to elementary school girls. All three models include service projects that the girls develop and carry out. The project's goal is to help girls handle violence and conflict in their personal lives and to help them build important social skills.

Girl Scouts of the USA  
420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10018-2702  
212-852-5000

**NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION**

Under the leadership of the National Recreation and Park Association, local public park and recreations systems, youth-serving agencies, individuals, and other organizations have joined forces to provide programs for youth that include gang prevention and intervention, leadership training, substance abuse prevention, community activism, employment training and entrepreneurship, and artistic enrichment. Usually the recreation and park department serves as the lead agency,

coordinating the resources and expertise of others. Key partners include law enforcement, schools, public health, parents, and youth. Recreation and park agencies hire individuals directly from the community and then train these local leaders. These individuals then serve as mentors and role models with whom youth can share their frustrations, goals, and successes.

National Recreation and Park Association  
2775 South Quincy Street, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22206  
703-820-4940

**OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL**

With the slogan, "Friend of Youth," 4,200 Optimist clubs across the United States, Canada, and Jamaica involve youth in annual celebrations of Respect for Law Week and a Day of Non-Violence. They carry out projects that range from family rallies and vigils to poster contests and toy trade-in programs. As a result of public apathy toward crime and indifference toward the law enforcement community, Optimist International developed the Respect for Law Week in 1965 to increase

citizen involvement in crime prevention efforts and increase public awareness of outstanding law enforcement officers. A Day of Non-Violence was added in 1995 as a day for Optimists and their communities to ban together to promote peace, harmony, and community spirit and to bring an end to violence. The Optimist Clubs carry out over 65,000 service projects and serve or involve more than 6 million youth annually.

Optimist International  
4494 Lindell Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
314-371-6000

**POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL)**

PAL is a recreation-oriented youth crime prevention program that relies on athletics and recreational activities to create and cement bonds between law enforcement and the kids on their beats. PAL recognizes that children and youth need safe recreational activities that engage their energy and enthusiasm. PAL promotes greater trust and understanding between youngsters and police officers and brings youth under the supervision and influence of a responsible agency. The police officer's role is to reinforce and support the responsible values and attitudes instilled in young people by their parents. The idea behind PAL is to provide positive alternatives to youth ages 10 to 17, including sports programs, educational field trips, and community service. The police officers act as teachers, mentors, friends, and role models.

Police Athletic League  
618 U.S. Highway 1, Suite 201  
North Palm Beach, FL 33408-4609  
561-844-1823

**Hands for Peace**

Students at the James A. Davis Middle School in Bessemer, Alabama, created a two-sided wall that delivered a powerful message about the impact of violence on their lives. On one side, handprints held the names of friends or family members lost to violence. The wall also displayed the pictures and names of others who died as a result of violence in Bessemer. On the Peace side, students outlined their hands and within the borders described the ways they could help stop the violence. A memorial candlelight vigil followed the unveiling of the wall. Most families of those memorialized attended, expressing hope that the project becomes an annual event.

*I know how I feel when people come up here and do nice stuff for us, it makes you feel good. But it feels even better, to be the one on the giving end. When we deliver our packages to the homeless people, I know I'm making them feel good. I never thought I'd be the one to make anyone feel better.*

**Shane, Indiana Boys School**

### TEENS, CRIME, AND THE COMMUNITY

In 1985, with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law combined to empower teens to make themselves and their communities safer, founding the Teens, Crime, and the Community (TCC) program. TCC offers students in grades seven through twelve comprehensive classroom instruction, in an infusion format, on a variety of crime prevention topics. TCC also encourages students to develop crime prevention projects for their school or community. These projects have included violence prevention education campaigns, service to a victim assistance group, and formation of school-based crime watch groups. Since its inception, TCC has been implemented in more than forty states, reaching over 500,000 youth through school and community-based programs. Nearly every TCC program evaluated from 1989 to 1992 demonstrated an increased knowledge of the risks and nature of victimization, ways to prevent crime, and how to assist victims.

Teens, Crime, and the Community  
National Crime Prevention Council  
1700 K Street, NW, Second floor  
Washington, DC 20006-3817  
202-466-6272

### YOUTH AS RESOURCES

The Youth as Resources project (YAR) began in 1987 in Indiana with funding from the Lilly Endowment, and now operates in more than 30 communities across the country and in Poland and Canada. The Center for Youth as Resources opened its doors in 1995 with offices in Washington, DC, and Indianapolis. YAR is a community-based effort in which local boards, made up of young people and adults, provide small grants to groups of young people. Youth submit proposals and,

if funded, carry out projects they've designed to meet those social issues they feel most strongly about. Involving more than 60,000 youth today, YAR projects have included disaster relief in counties ravaged by floods and providing companionship for sick or elderly neighborhood residents to teaching peers about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. YAR volunteers range in age from five to 21. The model involves all types of youth—from drop-outs and youth in detention centers and public housing to gifted students and teen activists: It has tackled every issue of importance—from teen pregnancy and homelessness to mentoring and conflict mediation. Schools, churches, and community-based organizations have served as bases for YAR initiatives. Over 93 percent of YAR participants surveyed in Indiana felt that their projects were successes and that young people can change their own lives and the lives of others.

The Center for Youth as Resources  
1700 K Street, NW, Suite 801  
Washington, DC 20006-3817  
202-466-6272

### Youth-to-Youth Programs Combat Drugs

In Evansville, Indiana, teens organized a Teen Council and sponsored a video on alternatives to drug use, identifying fun activities in the area that did not involve illegal substances. In New York City, young people in Youth Unlimited trained peers in life skills and started a program in which a group of youth identified as emotionally disabled restored a children's garden in a park that had become littered with drug paraphernalia. Members of the Natural Helpers Program in Hampton City, Virginia, talk to younger children about avoiding alcohol and other drugs and operate a program to help youth adjust to new school situations, such as entering high school. Natural Helpers serve as drug-free role models and special friends.

**Resources**

*Delinquency Prevention Works: Program Summary*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 1995. Contact OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20857, 800-638-8736.

*Preventing Crime & Promoting Responsibility: 50 Programs That Help Communities Help Their Youth*, The President's Crime Prevention Council, 736 Jackson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20503, 202-395-5565. Single copies free while supplies last.

*350 Tested Strategies To Prevent Crime: A Resource for Municipal Agencies and Community Groups*, The National Crime Prevention Council, 1995.

*Public Recreation in High Risk Environments*, National Recreation and Park Association, 2775 South Quincy Street, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22206, 703-820-4940.

*Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, PO Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000, 800-638-8736.

*Reducing Youth Gun Violence: An Overview of Programs and Initiatives* is available free from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at PO Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000, 800-638-8736.

*Making a Difference: Young People in Community Crime Prevention Council*, National Crime Prevention Council, 1985.

*Charting Success: A Workbook for Developing Crime Prevention and Other Community Service Projects*, National Crime Prevention Council, 1995.

*Between Hope and Fear: Teens Speak Out on Crime and the Community*, National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law, 202-546-6644.



**TAKE A BITE OUT OF  
 CRIME**

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