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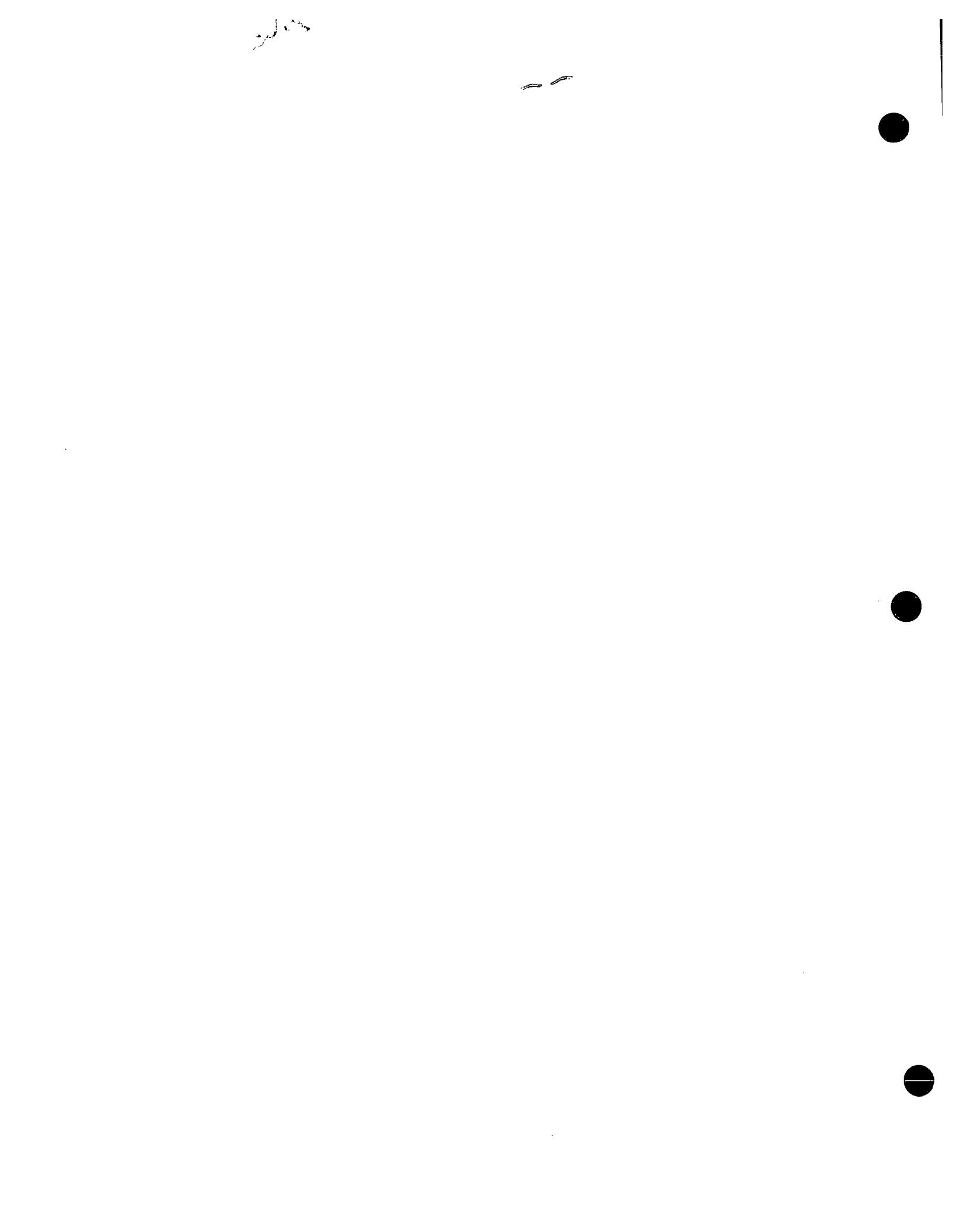
JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INITIATIVE SUPPORTS COMMUNITY-WIDE EFFORTS TO REDUCE JUVENILE CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Six communities -- Contra Costa County, California; Imperial County, California; Boston; St. Louis; Seattle; and the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Harlem, Montana -- will share almost \$8 million in federal crime-fighting funds to combat juvenile crime and delinquency, Attorney General Janet Reno announced today. These communities will participate in "SafeFutures," a comprehensive Department of Justice program that combines efforts such as community-wide gang strategies, juvenile justice interventions for juvenile offenders, and prevention programming including afterschool, mentoring, and family strengthening programs into a collaborative initiative that will target at-risk and delinquent youth throughout their development.

In announcing the grants, Reno cited recent statistics that predict a doubling in juvenile arrests for violent crime by the year 2010 if last decade's trends continue unchecked.

"We cannot allow demographics to become destiny," she said. "Safe Futures is an investment in finding ways to do better and make our streets safer. It's about common-sense government. We must reach at-risk youth at every point of their development with

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partnerships among government, law enforcement, corrections, education, social services, and community residents."

SafeFutures is designed to reach children of all ages, ranging from those "at-risk" of involvement in delinquency to serious and violent juvenile offenders. The program sets out to improve public safety through a continuum of prevention, intervention and treatment services for at-risk and delinquent youth. These services must be provided through a customer-oriented approach in which there is broad collaboration between juvenile service agencies at all levels of government and the private sector.

The SafeFutures program was developed by the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to enhance community partnerships to combat juvenile crime and delinquency. OJJDP combined previously separate programs into components of the comprehensive SafeFutures initiative. These programs included both those designed for at-risk youth such as afterschool programs, job training, mentoring, and family support programs, and those designed for juvenile offenders such as graduated sanctions, drug treatment, aftercare, and victim restitution.

"The six SafeFutures communities have already made progress in bringing together many different elements to form an effective response to juvenile crime and delinquency," said OJJDP Administrator Shay Bilchik. "SafeFutures will help these

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communities expand their efforts, with the hope that they can serve as a model for other communities."

Each SafeFutures site selected demonstrated a strong local commitment from a diverse coalition, including public agencies, non-profit groups, local government, and private citizens, to implementing their SafeFutures strategy. The selected sites also showed strong ties with both Department of Justice programs and related programs within the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing, Education, and Labor. The sites are closely linking to initiatives led by United States Attorneys and Department of Justice programs such as Weed and Seed.

Four of the six sites (Boston, St. Louis, Seattle, and Imperial County) are designated Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and all will be building upon the strong coalitions there to address the problem of delinquency and violence.

There is a broad geographic diversity represented among the selected sites including four urban communities (Contra Costa County, Boston, Seattle, and St. Louis), one rural community (Imperial County), and one Indian Community (Fort Belknap).

Each SafeFutures strategy was designed locally to meet the individual community's needs. For example, Seattle will expand its Cambodian Girls Group, an outreach program aimed at Cambodian girls ages 12-18 who are involved in gang activities. Contra Costa County will also help at-risk girls through expanding

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mentoring programs. St. Louis will launch a community-wide gang task force and expand treatment and restitution programs for juvenile offenders. Fort Belknap will target juvenile offenders through intensive probation and electronic monitoring.

Each of the sites will receive \$1.41 million, with the exception of the Fort Belknap Indian Community, which will receive the requested amount of \$900,000. Funds awarded will be used over the next 12 months. Currently, the program is scheduled to be funded for five years. OJJDP will provide technical assistance to the six communities throughout the grant period. Boys and Girls Clubs of America, AmeriCorps, and other public and private agencies have agreed to lend their expertise to the implementation of this initiative.

Each site will work with OJJDP to evaluate their program to determine whether it had an impact on juvenile crime and delinquency rates. OJJDP will also fund a national evaluation to determine if the program could be adopted in other communities.

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