

FINAL REPORT

YOUTH JUSTICE COUNCIL TASK FORCE ON DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

A major priority of the Youth Justice Council when it designated its task forces was delinquency prevention. Although the JJDP Act of 1974 and other documents allude to delinquency prevention, very little had been done which lead to formal policy. The following describes the goal and objectives for the Task Force on Delinquency Prevention:

Goal: To develop a delinquency prevention policy for the state of Montana which defines delinquency prevention, provides a basis for funding programs, develops proposed legislation, and mandates evaluation and accountability of youth development and delinquency prevention programs.

Objectives:

- I. To make specific recommendations to educational systems to help prevent juvenile crime
- II. To make specific recommendations to employers, unions, and public employment agencies concerning youth activities
- III. To make specific recommendations to the health profession and the general public concerning the relationship between health and juvenile crime
- IV. To promote coordination among existing state, local government, and private agencies to implement a unified delinquency prevention policy

The task force completed hearings in three major delinquency prevention areas: 1) Education, 2) Employment, and 3) Health. Testifying before the task force were prominent national and state experts, including: Dr. Del Elliott, Director of the Behavioral Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado; Dr. Irving Piliavin, Dean of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin; Mr. Ron Bacon of the Okemos Public Schools, Okemos, Michigan (also associated with the Mott Foundation Community School concept); and, Dr. Will Stratford a Missoula psychiatrist, associated with the Montana State Prison.

Presentation of Goals

- A. To develop a delinquency prevention policy for the State of Montana; B. which defines delinquency prevention; C. provides a basis for funding programs; D. develops proposed legislation; and, E. mandates evaluation and accountability of youth development and delinquency prevention programs.

## A. PROPOSED STATE POLICY

Because the human and material costs of delinquency are profound; and because the effects are often irreversible and the losses irretrievable; the State of Montana acknowledges the prevention of delinquency to be of first and highest priority in its system of criminal justice.

## B. TO DEFINE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

Delinquency Prevention - Specific efforts directed toward maintaining positive and constructive behavior or modifying potentially illegal behavior to the extent that there are no violations of law.

## C. PROVIDE BASIS FOR FUNDING PROGRAMS

Those proposed programs which most effectively address themselves to the prevention of delinquency, as defined and show the promise of greatest impact for greatest number of youth at the lowest reasonable cost will receive priority consideration for funding.

## D. DEVELOP PROPOSED LEGISLATION

- I. Recommendations of this Task Force in some cases will require changes in Montana statutes. The Montana Youth Justice Council should propose appropriate legislation to the next Legislature.

## E. MANDATES EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

1. Base line data on the frequency, nature, possible causes of delinquency, and background of the offender should be gathered by the smallest possible political subdivision statewide.
2. The data base shall be used as one consideration in identifying types of delinquency acts and the geographic regions to be awarded funds for delinquency prevention programs.
3. The effectiveness of prevention programs should be measured by the impact on delinquent behavior and the enhancement of positive behavior.
4. Youth serving agencies should coordinate and share data collection efforts.

## Presentation of Objectives

The task forces' approach was primarily institutional in nature, focusing on existing social institutions such as education, employment, and health. The prevalent policies, practices, and beliefs of institutions tremendously influence any intervention which might prevent delinquency.

One of the most serious problems found by the task force is the abdication of parental responsibility. In recent decades the role of the family has been consistently preempted by social institutions. In the end what is needed are strategies which reinforce the role and responsibility of the family and work with existing and sanctioned institutions.

The following recommendations will require continual work by the Youth Justice Council and it's staff. Coordination with other agencies will be essential. The Youth Justice Council should authorize it's staff to pursue the implementation of the recommendations in their final approved form.

### Objective I - To make specific recommendations to educational systems to prevent juvenile crimes.

The potential role of schools relative to juvenile delinquency emerged as a major issue for the task force. Two separate hearings were held concerning the relationship of schools to delinquency. Findings are presented without comment but in most cases form the basis for recommendations.

### Finding

1. By using the school facility to its maximum and increasing community "ownership" of its facilities, pilot projects have effected some meaningful impacts on lowering school-related delinquency. Community School programs have a direct impact on reducing vandalism, reducing referrals to juvenile probation, increasing attendance, and decreasing suspensions. School-related status offenses are a problem in Montana. The Task Force feels that the Community School concept could be a tremendous aid in preventing delinquency.

### Recommendations

1. The Task Force urges the establishment of Community School programs on a county wide or district wide basis. The Community School concept which was initially developed by the Kellogg and Mott Foundations is defined as follows:

COMMUNITY SCHOOL: A school serving a grouping of residents in a community that makes its facilities available for citizen use; organizes the participation of citizens in assessing local conditions, setting of priorities and program planning; identifies and utilizes resources; facilitates joint planning by local agencies; and initiating new and/or improved programs in an effort to improve the opportunity for all residents.

2. Support the Center for Community Education at Montana State University and Community Education Office within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Representatives from both of these programs made presentations to the Task Force.
3. Encourage State, Federal, and local sources to provide seed money for Community Education projects in Montana.
4. Promote in-service training of school board members on community education.
5. Provide school board members with information on the "results" of Community Education programs. (i.e., lower vandalism and theft, increased attendance, increased public support)
6. Schools should be encouraged to develop educational programs aimed at strengthening the family unit.

#### Finding

2. Studies indicate that many students who are experiencing failure in school are potential delinquents. Student failure may be the result of a host of factors controlled by the school. One of these is the failure syndrome or the "self fulfilling prophecy" which is accentuated by rigid ability grouping or tracking systems practiced in some schools. Such tracking systems usually lead to labelling or stigmatizing of students and reinforce in students negative self-concepts. Studies indicate that IQ is not a significant variable between delinquent students and non-delinquent students. The relationship between students with negative self-concepts and students who become delinquent is significant.

## Recommendation:

That schools be encouraged to examine all aspects of their programs which place students with learning situations where they continually fail. Where ability grouping or tracking is practiced, extreme caution ought to be exercised by the schools to avoid stigmatizing, labelling, creating and reinforcing negative self-concepts, and contributing to defacto ethnic-socioeconomic stratification.

## Finding

- 2a. Research presented to the task force analyzed the effect of dropping out of school on juvenile delinquency. The research was presented by Dr. Delbert Elliott of the University of Colorado and the Behavioral Research Institute author of Delinquency and Dropout (Lexington Books D.C. Health and Company 1974). The research found that "dropouts consistently have a higher police contact rates than graduates for every period they are in school, and these rates increase with time while they are in school. However, the police contact rate systematically declines in the period after which dropout occurs, and it continues to decline in subsequent time periods. In the later periods the rates are substantially lower than the rates for graduates. Use of the self-report measure produces similar findings. The dropouts reach a high level of involvement in delinquency prior to leaving school, but once they are out of school, their involvement in serious offenses declines substantially, and the total number of offenses reported declines slightly. In comparison, graduates report an increasing number of delinquent acts, as well as serious offenses, with time. Whether delinquency is measured in terms of police contacts or self reports, similar patterns are revealed. The rates of delinquency for those out of school are no greater-and possibly slightly lower than the rates for students in school. The relationship between delinquency and dropout cannot be explained by class or sex differences among dropouts and graduates or by differential visibility."

(Research available upon request)

- 2b. The Task Force sponsored a statewide survey of junior and high school youth. The survey sample consisted of schools in 50 communities. It included a balanced cross-section between Montana urban and rural areas. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the youth responded that not enough different kinds of classes were offered within the schools. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the youth responded that there was a lack of alternative school programs. An extraordinary number of youth: 54% stated that a major problem was not having enough say in how schools are run. Eighteen percent (18%) of the youth interviewed stated that they were considering dropping out of school. (See survey report for a complete breakdown of data).

### Recommendation

1. That schools be encouraged to work out alternative programs, within the school structure, for the prevention of delinquency and school dropouts. That schools develop programs which involve the child in meaningful activities, that are "hands on" types of programs and that, throughout the system, more and better career education and vocational education programs and facilities be implemented. Solutions can be reached by exploring a wider range of alternative learning contexts.
2. Schools should consider provisions for potential dropouts to have a school approved leave of absence for a set period of time. Students who return from such approved leaves of absence should be able to reenter school without the stigma of having been a dropout.
3. That local school boards be empowered to make exceptions to the mandatory school age when extenuating circumstances occur and when such determinations are in the best interests of the student. That O.S.P.I. be encouraged to work towards implementing this recommendation by achieving the necessary legislation.

### Finding

3. Delinquency is not an "8 to 5" problem. More flexible work situations must be developed if the system is to be used effectively.

### Recommendation

That counselors and other personnel be encouraged to engage in professional activities in off-school sites at a time and place expedient to parents and students. More flexible job descriptions for counselling and guidance personnel should be developed. A general review should be made of guidance and counselling functions so that present personnel be redirected to perform services with the family regarding the student. Teachers should receive training on certain counselling techniques because of their extensive contact with students.

### Finding

4. The schools are society's largest common denominator for youth activity. The early detection of youth problems could be greatly facilitated by school personnel.

### Recommendation

That state dollars be made available by the Child and Youth Development Bureau, the Board of Crime Control, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for incentive grant programs for delinquency prevention. A portion of current funding should be so designated. This recommendation should be discussed with appropriate persons at OSPI.

### Finding

5. One of the major problems listed by youth in our Statewide youth needs survey was "youth not having enough say in how schools are run".

### Recommendation

Students' roles should be more active in such areas as personal goal setting and school activities. Within the boundaries of defined and well understood legal and administrative constraints, students should be afforded greater consultation opportunities in other decision making processes within the school system.

### Finding

6. The Task Force did not specifically research the relationships between learning disabilities and delinquency and consequently cannot assess the causal links between the two events if in fact any exist. However, the group did review sufficient clinical information to conclude that the question is important and warrants further attention especially as it relates to the effects of frustrations generated by school failure.

### Finding

7. There is a need for better and more relevant training for those engaged in youth services in Montana.

### Recommendations

1. The Youth Justice Council, the Board of Crime Control, and the Child and Youth Development Bureau should sponsor a training initiative on delinquency prevention for school personnel and youth serving agencies. The consolidated training effort should be coordinated with other training initiatives of the Youth Justice Council. The possibility of a formal training institute should be pursued by the Council.

2. Task Force representatives and Council staff should meet with the Deans' of Education of Montana's teacher training institutions and other concerned parties concerning an interdisciplinary approach to training.
3. The training that school psychologists and school counselors receive in social problems of youth should be made consistently and abundantly available to teachers by these specialists through in-service training workshops and on the job assistance in the handling of problem cases.
4. That school administrators and teachers become more involved in establishing guidelines for teacher certification so that teachers who are recruited possess the special skills, attitudes and abilities to effectively deal with children's problems.
5. That the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Centers need child and youth specialists on staff and should provide clearly identifiable child mental health services operating at each center throughout the state. Paraprofessionals with appropriate training and supervision could be used to assist in these services particularly in smaller communities.
6. That the development and expansion of delinquency prevention programs be encouraged by relevant public and private organizations (community school programs, Boy's Clubs, Scouting programs, etc.).

Objective II - To make specific recommendations to employers, unions and public employment agencies concerning youth activities.

The Task Force in its' hearings could not establish a direct link between youth unemployment and delinquency prevention. The relationship to youth unemployment to delinquency is constantly referred to in criminal justice literature but rarely thoroughly analyzed. The dialogue supporting youth employment efforts increasingly emphasizes their contribution toward reducing delinquency and youth crime by emphasizing more positive and socially acceptable attitudes and values and by constructively occupying leisure time.

Dr. Irving Piliavin, Dean of Social Work, University of Wisconsin, presented to the task force a number of findings concerning the relationship of youth employment to juvenile crime. Members from various Montana agencies concerned with employment and an AFL-CIO representative were also present. Representatives from the Department of Labor and Industry's Labor Standards Division presented youth labor restrictions. After considerable analysis and discussion the task force listed the following problem areas and recommendations:

1. Career Education should be further emphasized. Journeymen and craftsmen should be used as resources for the teacher.
2. Youth employment programs should also be designed for out-of-school youth.
3. Youth employment and other social service programs should serve "high risk" youth as well as others. (Programs should consider a minimum level of juvenile justice system referrals).
4. School preparation for the job market should be emphasized.
5. The task force should assist with the effort sponsored by Senate Joint Resolution 40, which will study child labor laws.
6. The task force should support the current initiative between the Governor's Manpower Council and the Department of Institutions for work experience programs in state institutions.
7. "Pre-apprenticeship" programs as defined by AFL-CIO should be established.
8. Reemphasize the need for greater cooperation between school counselors and the employment sector for improved employment services to youth.
9. A short publication should be developed that describes what youth can do for employment versus long lists of labor restrictions or what youth can't do.
10. Research should be collected on rural youth employment as well as urban.
11. The private sector should be pursued for assistance with youth employment-juvenile justice programs.
12. Community Education Programs could be a mechanism for increasing youth employment opportunities.
13. Programs should be developed by appropriate public and private agencies, both at the state and local levels which train youth in skills and attitudes for obtaining and holding jobs.

Objective III - To make specific recommendations to the health profession and the general public concerning the relationship between health and juvenile crime.

A pediatrician and psychologist were active members on the Task Force and provided valuable information and expertise during all the work sessions. Dr. Will Stratford, a Missoula psychiatrist associated with the Montana State Prison, testified at a Task Force session devoted to psychiatric relationships to crime.

### Findings

Forty percent (40%) of the Montana State Prison inmates have anti-social personalities. Anti-social is now the inclusive psychiatric term for psychopathic and sociopathic personalities. Anti-social behavior patterns are evident in about 5% of the total population. According to Stratford, forty-five (45%) to fifty (50%) percent of juvenile delinquents have anti-social personalities. Anti-social behavior can often be associated with stealing, aggression, lack of control, hardness, detachment and lack of guilt.

Certain parental factors can be linked with anti-social behavior in children. They are unemployment, financial hardship, arrest records, drinking, desertion family disunity and quality of parent child relationships. Consistency of parental discipline is a very important factor.

New admissions to the Montana State Prison for FY 1977 included 61.7% under the age of 25; and 84.6% under the age of 35. Both Dr. Piliavin and Dr. Stratford mention a burnout factor of criminality around the age of 35. By far, the largest age cohort for prison admissions is the 18-20 group (111 of 345 admissions). Many of these are recent failures or "graduates" of the juvenile justice system. The prison age is getting younger.

There is a lack of referral sources in Montana for professional child and youth services. Montana has been referred to as a "disaster area" in terms of total numbers of trained psychiatrists in practice.

Nutrition is becoming an increasingly important factor in medical research in regards to childhood problems. Sound nutrition practices in some cases can help in overcoming certain problems such as hyper activity which can lead to early behavior problems.

### Recommendations

1. Schools should adopt better and more relevant health education programs. The O.S.P.I. should provide technical support for such programs.
2. Education programs concerning nutrition and its' relationship to problems for youth should be developed statewide.

3. Schools should be encouraged to offer health education programs including Human Growth and Development courses.
4. Community classes should be made available to teenagers and adults interested in becoming more aware of the factors that are related to the development of delinquent behavior and prevention of such behavior.
5. Efforts should be made by appropriate agencies to secure lists of available professional referral sources qualified to deal with the problems of youth and that such lists be disseminated to persons requesting help from those agencies.
6. Efforts should be made to expand and solidify cooperative exchanges between state and local agencies and private or public mental health providers relative to the assessment and treatment of troubled youth.
7. Where regional needs indicate, efforts should be made by State and local government to pursue and secure the competent and professional manpower necessary to assess and treat troubled youth.
8. Mental Health Centers through their trained professional should be used to their maximum potential in the diagnosis and treatment of troubled youth.

Objective IV - To promote coordination among existing state and local government agencies to implement a unified delinquency prevention policy.

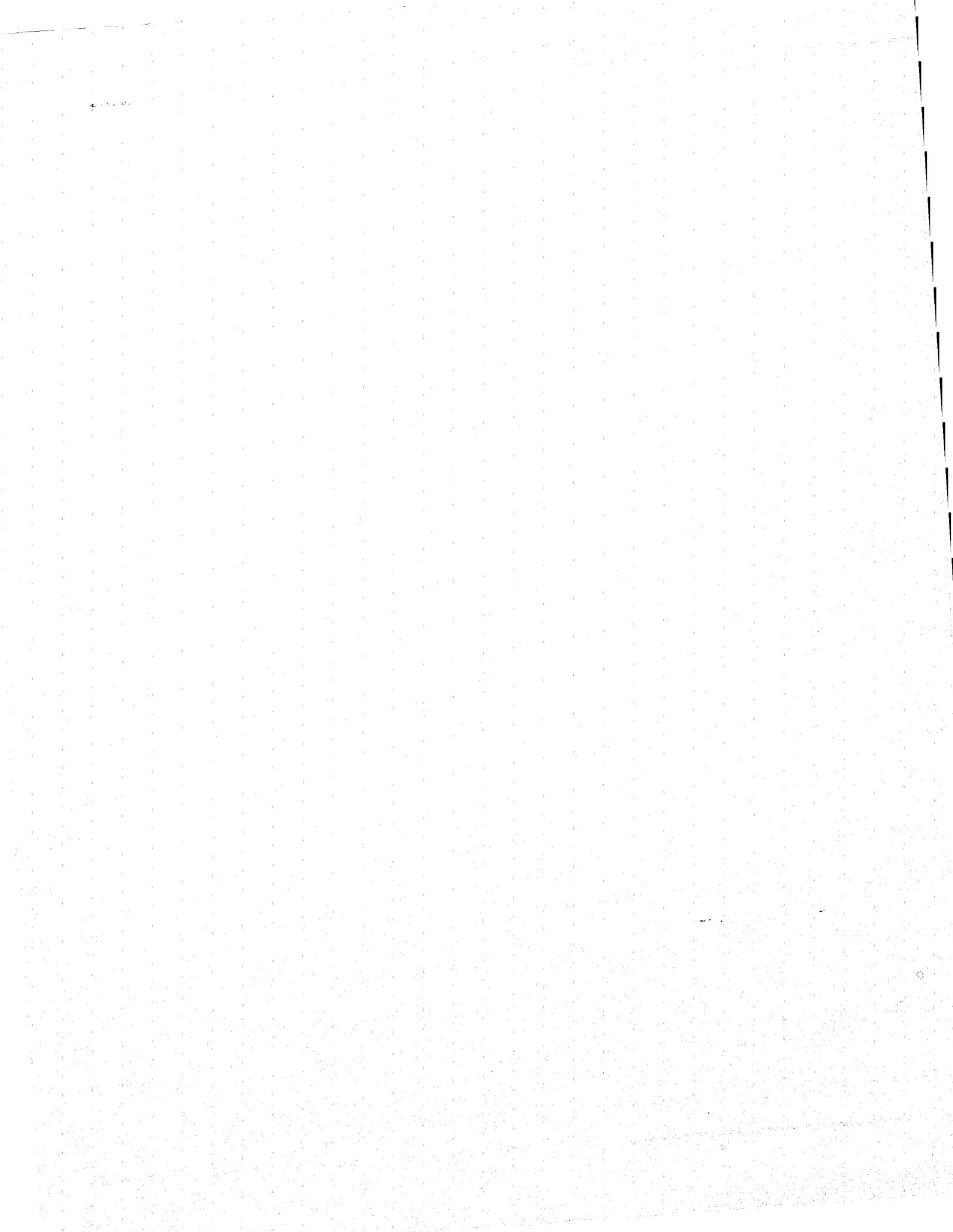
#### Finding

1. There is no state agency given the sole responsibility for providing for juvenile justice or prevention delinquency. There are, however, many individuals, agencies and organizations at every level across the state directing efforts toward preventing juvenile delinquency. There presently is no single clearinghouse for the collection of data, and exchange of information both for the juvenile justice system and delinquency prevention efforts.

#### Recommendations

1. The Executive Branch should establish such a clearinghouse function for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention within an existing state agency and authorize at least the following functions:

- a) To serve as a repository for information relative to delinquency and its prevention available from local, state and federal sources. This information should be made available to any interested person and dispersed in a reference library procedure.
- b) To invite all interested parties to become participating members of the clearinghouse. A regularly published compilation of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention program information and research should be distributed.
- c) Research data, evaluation designs, and findings should be provided to all state and federally funded juvenile justice and delinquency projects.
- d) The clearinghouse should have the capacity to evaluate juvenile justice and delinquency prevention efforts through arrangements with competent evaluators. Cost would be the responsibility of the operating agencies. Results of evaluations should be made public within the boundaries of "rights to privacy restrictions" and confidentiality requirements as prescribed by law.



**END**