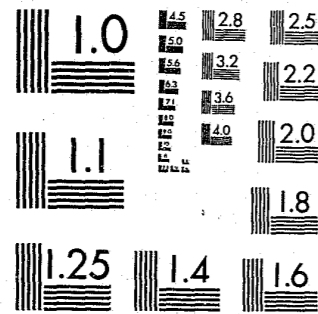


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OPTIONS FOR PREVENTING
DELINQUENCY IN VERMONT

Sponsored by the
Vermont Legislative Council

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December 1980

OPTIONS FOR PREVENTING DELINQUENCY IN VERMONT

a Report by the Vermont Legislative Council and
 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group

ACQUISITIONS

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

In late 1979, a study was conducted through the Vermont Legislative Council to determine the attitudes and opinions of a broad range of people in Vermont on preventing delinquency. One Hundred Seventeen (117) knowledgeable people in six representative Vermont communities and at the state level were asked about: whether there is support for delinquency prevention policy and program development; areas which would be appropriate for program intervention; types of programs which would be suitable; and state-level actions which would be helpful.

To help establish the validity of the ideas generated through interviews, this report synthesizes program preferences of interviewees with those supported by a national comprehensive study of Delinquency Prevention: Theories and Strategies (see footnote on page 6 of this report).

The major findings of this report are:

- . Most interviewees viewed delinquency as a serious problem in the State of Vermont requiring additional commitment of human and financial resources. Reported allocations of state resources for delinquency prevention were disproportionately low relative to the high priority generally accorded it.
- . Study findings and national research evidence both suggest that system-wide factors (within families, schools, etc.), rather than individual inadequacies, are the primary causes of delinquency. National research findings indicate that situations which permit young people to be viewed as useless and incompetent, not belonging and lacking the power to direct their own lives, will have a greater tendency to contribute to delinquent behavior.
- . Interviewees felt that the areas in a young person's life which could be most practically and effectively influenced were: schools and parents. Research into the experience of other states shows greater success using schools as a focal point. Attempts to influence parents' roles in their children's lives have encountered significant difficulty.
- . The most appropriate and feasible delinquency prevention efforts, combining both interviewee and national research support, were: changing school practices that appear to be damaging to youth and contribute to behavior problems; involving young people in meaningful work and community service as a way of gaining a sense of responsibility and importance; directing pressure of peer groups away from delinquency into interesting and exciting constructive activities, through working with adults; reducing negative labeling and alienation of young people (implying they are "bad kids") through constructive school-family interaction.

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- . Areas which received strong interviewee support and some national research support were: tutoring programs to reduce the risk of failure and alienation in school; teaching specific vocational skills to improve prospects for employment; strengthening family relationships and family interactions.
- . Areas which received interviewee support but little national research support were: traditional programs which teach young people about rights, responsibilities, and operations of law; individual counseling programs; recreational, or facility-based programs designed to provide "something to do"; early identification and treatment of pre-delinquents.
- . Two areas regarded as not worthy of support by both interviewees and national research were: increased severity of punishment as deterrence; increased security in neighborhoods and schools as deterrence.
- . Combined study results and national research findings suggest that delinquency prevention programs will be most effective if they have the following qualities: provide opportunities for youth to demonstrate worth and competence, be useful, be seen favorably by adults and peers, feel a sense of belonging; promote youth having a stake in their community and in themselves; not be corrective or treatment oriented; not single out individual youth for attention, thereby negatively labeling them; have the capacity to affect the largest number of youth for the most extended period of time; concentrate on the areas of schools and meaningful work/community service, and include the positive influence of parents/families and peers.
- . Interviewees recommended that the State of Vermont support the prevention of delinquency in the following ways: formulating clear policy or legislation that establishes direction for funding and defines agency roles; establishing a way for several agencies to jointly sponsor and fund programs.
- . Other areas mentioned frequently included: funding for experimental programs, better evaluations based on results, increased participation on the local level, and the establishment of a primary, coordinating authority to serve as a focal point for Vermont's delinquency prevention activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The concept of conducting a study on delinquency prevention in Vermont was formulated by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group (JJDPAG) of the Vermont Commission on the Administration of Justice (VCAJ). The Legislative Council, service branch to the Vermont Legislature, sponsored the study activities with a grant awarded by VCAJ.

Many people contributed greatly to this study. They include:

Prevention Study Oversight Committee:
William Russell, Legislative Council, Project Director for the Grant; Richard Campanelli and David Smith, Chairs of Oversight Committee; Rep. Gretchen Morse; Claudia Jacobs; and Jack Pransky, VCAJ.

Prevention Study Staff:
Pelton Goudy, Researcher/Director of the Study; Peter Dennett; and Judith Myers.

Prevention Study Design Assistance:
Judith Warren Little, Center for Action Research.

Report Preparation: Gloria C. Cohen. Edited by Prevention Study Oversight Committee.

The time and ideas generously shared by the 117 people participating in this study are warmly appreciated.

OPINIONS ON PREVENTING DELINQUENCY IN VERMONT

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Scope of the Study

Delinquency is an unsolved problem which requires continuing attention. There is increased interest across the country in preventing delinquent acts from occurring rather than merely reacting after the acts have occurred. This requires policies and programs quite different from correction and treatment-oriented approaches designed for delinquent youth already within the juvenile justice system.

To determine the best prevention approaches, decision-makers require information on many aspects of delinquency and prevention. Although some information is currently available, including inventories of programs and research results, information on people's reactions to delinquency and delinquency prevention is also required. These efforts must be effective in preventing delinquency, as well as accepted and supported by those who are involved in or affected by it.

B. Methodology of the Study

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group (JJDPAG) is responsible for guiding the Vermont Commission on the Administration of Justice (VCAJ) in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention* planning, and for advising the Governor and the Legislature on such matters. The Prevention Committee of the JJDPAG, established to explore effective delinquency prevention strategies, formulated the concept of a study to collect information on delinquency prevention attitudes in the State of Vermont to be used in future planning.

Since 1979 national delinquency prevention research has become available regarding strategies which have the best chance for success. This prevention study was designed to discover those strategies in which people in Vermont have the greatest confidence; strategies which would have the best chance of being supported as modes of action. This study then was designed to reveal the impressions, beliefs and preferences of a broad range of people in Vermont who are concerned with youth and delinquency. Included in the study were people in six representative Vermont communities (Brandon, Brattleboro, Burlington, Newport, Randolph, and Windsor) who work directly with youth, and those who develop policies, create legislation, and design programs which affect youths' lives. A wide variety of key people were interviewed at both State and community levels to gain insight on their views of delinquency prevention concepts and practice. (See Appendices A, B, and C for a complete listing of interviewee selection and methodology.)

An attempt was made to discover interviewees' views on four major areas. These areas and the interview guide questions used to elicit the answers are shown on the following page. For a listing of the complete questions in the interview guide, see Appendix D.

"Delinquency prevention" is defined by the Vermont Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group as follows: "Delinquency prevention" is any effort which has as its desired outcome fewer delinquent acts and/or a system-wide change of conditions which adversely affect youth. The target should be all kids (rather than concentrating only on those perceived to have potential to get into trouble) prior to their contact with the juvenile justice system, and community or institutional conditions.

To find out:

- . whether there was support for delinquency prevention policy and program development
- . areas which would be appropriate places for intervention
- . which types of programs would be suitable
- . which state-level actions would be helpful

The interview guide asked for:

- . impressions of the nature extent and severity of delinquency in Vermont (Questions 1a, 1b, 2, 9, 10)
- . impressions of causes and areas of youth's life which could be influenced. Supplemented by research evidence for report preparation. (Questions 3, 4)
- . assessments of 12 example programs on appropriateness, feasibility and agency support, and identification of existing successful or promising programs in Vermont. Supplemented by research evidence for report preparation. (Questions 5, 6, 7)
- . recommendations on appropriateness on 9 example actions and additional suggestions. (Question 8)

All summarized data are on file at the Legislative Council. Although individual responses will not be released to preserve the confidentiality of those who participated in the study, further information on the consolidated study results is available. For additional information, please contact William Russell, Chief Legislative Draftsman, at the Legislative Council.

C. Nature of this Report

This report contains the results of the Prevention Study, supplemented by research evidence drawn from a comprehensive study* of delinquency prevention theory and practice.

The research to date on delinquency prevention does not provide absolute solutions. But evidence does suggest which theories and activities appear to have a direct and positive effect on preventing delinquency, and those which are not correlated to prevention or are, in fact, counterproductive.

This report is designed to be useful to planners and policy-makers in a position to take action to improve delinquency prevention efforts. It is directed primarily toward Legislators, the Governor, and State agency personnel, specifically including: the Secretary of Human Services and the Commissioners of Mental Health, Social and Rehabilitation Services, Corrections, Education, the Directors of CETO (Comprehensive Employment and Training Office), and ADAD (Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division), Budget and Management, and the Vermont Commission on the Administration of Justice, as well as other high level State agency planning staff. Community leaders who are responsible for youth should find this report helpful in planning local level delinquency prevention efforts, as will those in a position to implement, or affect the implementation of, prevention efforts.

*Delinquency Prevention: Theories and Strategies, Johnson, Bird, Little (Center for Action Research), for U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1979. The full bibliography of this volume is included in this report as Appendix F.

This report identifies those areas in which theory (research results) and Vermont opinions (study results) are similar. Those areas which have the highest degree of congruence could serve as priority areas for an initial concentration of effort.

II. IS DELINQUENCY PREVENTION AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN VERMONT

A major factor in determining whether delinquency prevention efforts should be supported in the State of Vermont is the extent to which delinquency is seen as a problem. This portion of the study focused on discovering interviewees' impressions of seriousness of delinquency; whether it has increased or decreased; level of concern and priority; and allocation of resources for delinquency prevention.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of those interviewed on the local level felt that delinquent activity was the same as or greater than other states or communities of about the same size. An interesting contrast is that only 43% of those interviewed on the State level felt the same way, while another 43% of State level interviewees felt that Vermont had less of a delinquency problem.

To the question, "how serious would you say the delinquency problem is in this state/community", most respondents indicated "serious." Twenty-two percent (22%) of local level interviewees and 9% of state level interviewees said "very serious." No one indicated "not serious."

Several interviewees commented that juvenile crime in Vermont was generally limited to disturbing the peace, vandalism, breaking and entering, or drug or alcohol-related activities. "Hard-crime" was considered to be a less prevalent problem. Forty-six percent (46%) of those interviewed believed that delinquency was greater in their area than it had been five years ago. Only 13% indicated "less." (See Appendix E for graphs pertaining to the questions in this section.)

When asked about the general level of concern for delinquency in the State or community compared to all other concerns and issues, responses were also in the mid-high range. Only three percent (3%) of the people interviewed reported very low concern about delinquency.

The priority which an organization places on programs to reduce or prevent troubled behavior was also reported at the mid-high range. A majority of the interviewees, however, responded that allocation of resources for delinquency prevention was below 25 percent of agency spending. Frequently mentioned reasons for this discrepancy included: other priorities taking precedence; restriction of funding sources; and hesitation to allocate significant resources without adequate assurance of effectiveness of prevention programs.

In summary, the results of the study showed that delinquency was considered to be a serious problem, although not in the critical range. The responses to these questions indicate that delinquency prevention is an important issue worthy of Vermont policy and program development. (See graphs in Appendix E.)

III. WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL PROGRAM APPROACHES?

A. What Causes Youth to Become Involved in Delinquent Activities?

In an open-ended question, interviewees were asked to identify causes of delinquency that appear to be the most powerful. Their responses were clustered into categories to make the volume of responses more manageable. See Chart 1 on the following page for the categories and response percentages.

The majority of the interviewees approached the question of causation of delinquency by citing circumstances (e.g., broken homes), or areas (e.g., school), or visible symptoms (e.g., boredom). More pertinent questions are: What is it about that situation that contributes to delinquent behavior? What is it about that situation that helps to prevent delinquent behavior? Some of the responses which were put in the category "parents and family", however did suggest more specific activities. Frequently mentioned were poor communication with parents, that parents don't care about kids, and poor parenting skills.

Research efforts provide further insight into the underlying factors which influence delinquency. Although there are many theories of causation of delinquent behavior, from individual personality traits to the absence of social opportunities, the explanation having widest acceptance currently in the national research field is the concept of "bonding." Central to this theory is the assumption that most people stay out of trouble most of the time because they are "bonded" to the conventional norms of society through commitment, investment, attachment, involvement, etc. with a variety of people and organizations around them. Research findings suggest that if young people feel that they are viewed as useless, that they don't belong, that they are incompetent, and that they lack the power to direct their own life, they will have a greater tendency to become delinquent. The systems and institutions in youths' lives, (schools, families, the world of work) often do not provide them with the opportunities to achieve and express feelings of investment, competence, etc. In this way, these systems have an unintended yet powerful adverse effect on youth.

Research evidence on some of the categories suggested by interviewees shows: There is evidence that an unstable home life can influence delinquency; however, broken homes, as such, do not appear to predict delinquency. Most people seem to feel that parents and family have the greatest influence on young people. While this may be true for children under 12, school experiences and peer pressure appear to have even greater effect on delinquency, particularly as young people move into Junior High School and the first two years of High School. In fact, several studies have shown school experiences to be the primary influence on delinquent behavior. Contrary to popular belief, there is no current evidence that idle time or boredom contributes to delinquency. However, peer pressure and the lack of opportunities in which to gain and demonstrate competence have been shown to be related to delinquent activities.

Both study results and research evidence suggest that system-wide factors within families, schools, peer groups, etc., rather than individual inadequacies, are the primary causes of delinquency. Within these situations, when inadequate opportunities for young people to learn and practice responsibility are provided, the responsibility that is expected and demanded of them is not so readily or easily attained.

CHART 1
INTERVIEWEES' OPINIONS ON CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>PERCENT OF INTERVIEWEES</u>
Parents/Family	81
Social Influences*	38
Boredom	25
School	22
Peer Pressure	18
Drugs and Alcohol	16
Police and Courts	15
Poverty	14
Lack of Jobs	11
Lack of Goals	7
Community Attitude	3

*including changing values, tendency toward materialism and immediate gratification, impact of television.

B. Which Areas of a Youth's Life Can be Influenced?

One way to narrow down the possibilities for programmatic action to affect change in patterns of delinquency is to identify those areas in which influence can pragmatically be exerted. Again, an open-ended question was used in the study to identify those areas of a young person's life which could be most practically and effectively influenced by State or local delinquency prevention programs. According to interviewees, the primary areas of influence are:

- (a) involvement in school - 40%* (especially changing curriculum -25%);
- (b) communication with parents - 36%;
- (c) interaction with police and courts - 29%;
- (d) goal and self image - 23%;
- (e) role model - 19%.

Although it was not clear whether interviewees thought that these were areas which could benefit from or feasibly be affected by outside influence, schools and families again ranked high.

Some hesitations in using the school as an influencing factor were: lack of assurance of quality due to financial restraints; lack of contact with drop-outs; and the difficulty of changing such established procedures as curriculum and tracking. These qualifications, however, were not seen as being major obstacles. School-based experiences generally appear to be both powerful in their relationship to delinquency and able to be constructively influenced.

The area of interaction with parents was viewed as having significant potential by a large number of interviewees, but many included qualifying statements referring to problems of: scale; cost considerations; consistency of influence; potential intrafamily negative labeling; efficacy of intervention; and other factors. In other words, while families were seen as being a powerful source of influence, this area was viewed as difficult and expensive to address with state or local policy and funds.

Some causes identified by interviewees (e.g., "general societal values" such as television) were not seen as within the power of the state to influence. Still other areas for which it is easy to create programs (e.g., boredom), have been shown to have little connection to preventing delinquency.

C. What Sorts of Programs Might be Suitable?

A wide variety of programs might potentially be useful in preventing delinquency; however, limitations on resources require that special attention be given to programs which have the highest probability for success. Such programs must be both effective and acceptable to those involved with them.

The first step is to look at existing programs mentioned by interviewees. This will illustrate which programs are perceived as working in Vermont so

*frequency of response

that it might be possible to build on present strengths. A review of existing programs may also indicate which areas are not currently being utilized.

In the study, interviewees were asked to identify programs which currently exist, both in their own and in others' agencies which offer the greatest promise for reducing troublesome behavior. Program areas most often listed for the interviewee's own agency were: school, youth programs, education, counseling, police, and recreation. In others' agencies, frequently mentioned program areas were: recreation, school, role model, diversion, mental health and social services, and youth employment.

As in other segments of this study, the category of school drew a high frequency of responses. Programs dealing specifically with parents and family were not frequently mentioned. Some suggested that this could be due to the difficulty of implementing family-oriented programs. Youth employment programs also ranked relatively low. Was this due to implementation difficulty, lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the program area, or the nature of current economic conditions? The fact that diversion programs were mentioned suggests that there are discrepancies in the definition of "prevention", considered by some to mean prevention of further delinquent involvement.

To explore further the interviewees' ideas on possible program approaches, the study provided 12 example programs in random order. Program examples were intended to help identify areas on which to focus attention. Should the program involve an individual or organizational setting? On which areas of life should the focus be (for example, school, work, family, community, justice)? Which assumptions on the causes of delinquency provide the foundation for the selected program areas?

For each of the 12 example programs in the study, interviewees were asked to express their feelings on: (a) the appropriateness of the program example in preventing delinquency, whether the program addressed the major causes of delinquency, regardless of the ease of implementation; (b) feasibility, defined as the ease of implementation, disregarding cost considerations; and (c) the interest of the interviewee's agency in participating in such a program. (The results of this last topic, agency interest, reflect to some extent the proportion of types of agencies which participated in the study.)

Chart 2 lists the 12 example programs about which interviewees were asked, and identifies a brief title for each to be used in later charts and discussions.

Chart 3 provides a summary of interviewee responses on each program area. The value in the average scores listed on the chart is their quick illustration of general preferences of the interviewees: areas of clear interest and areas clearly rejected.

In only two instances, increased severity of punishment and increased security, did a large number of survey respondents indicate that their agencies would discourage or oppose such efforts. Early identification of pre-delinquents was also questioned by a number of respondents.

CHART 2

PREVENTION PROGRAM EXAMPLES
LISTED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<u>BRIEF TITLE</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>
Tutoring	A. Programs of individual tutoring to reduce the risk of failure and alienation in school.
Punishment	B. Programs to deter wrong-doing by increasing the severity of punishment.
Work/Community Service	C. Programs which involve young people in work and community projects as a way of giving them a sense of responsibility and importance.
Security	D. Programs to deter wrong-doing by tighter security in neighborhoods or schools.
School and Family	E. Programs to reduce alienation and negative labeling by improving relations between schools and families, i.e., home/school coordinators, parents in the school doing things as volunteers, etc.
Early Identification	F. Programs to control or correct troublesome behavior by the early identification and treatment of "predelinquents."
Peer Pressure/Work with Adults	G. Programs to reduce pressure of peer groups toward delinquency by creating more opportunities for youth to work with adults.
Teach Law	H. Programs to improve attitudes toward law-abiding behavior by teaching young children about rights, responsibilities and the operations of law.
Vocational Skills	I. Programs to enhance individuals' prospects for employment by teaching specific vocational skills.
Recreation	J. Programs to reduce the opportunity for delinquent activity by expanding facilities and opportunities for "something to do," e.g., recreation.

Chart 2 (cont'd)

<u>BRIEF TITLE</u>	<u>PROGRAM</u>
Individual Counseling	K. Programs to control or correct individuals' tendencies toward delinquent behavior by providing individual counseling for personal problems.
School Practice	L. Programs to reduce pressures toward delinquency by changing (e.g., tracking, disciplinary procedures, etc.) that appear to contribute to that behavior.

CHART 3

RELATIVE APPROPRIATENESS AND FEASIBILITY
OF DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

AVERAGE SCORE FOR ALL INTERVIEWEES

<u>PROGRAMS</u>	<u>APPROPRIATE*</u>	<u>FEASIBLE*</u>	<u>SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH**</u>
Tutoring	4.1	3.9	+
Punishment	2.4	3.2	-
Work/Community Services	4.6	4.4	++
Security	2.9	3.4	-
School & Family	4.3	3.9	++
Early Identification	4.1	3.7	-
Peer Pressure/Work with Adults	4.4	4.2	++
Teach Law	4.0	4.3	0
Vocational Skills	4.5	4.6	+
Recreation	4.1	4.1	0
Individual Counseling	4.2	4.1	0
School Practice	4.1	3.9	++

*5 = most appropriate/feasible; 1 = least appropriate/feasible

**++ = strongly supported by research
 + = some support by research
 0 = little support by research
 - = no support by research

Programs which research findings suggest are more likely to be effective in preventing delinquency are those which have the following features:

Experience in school

- . access to opportunities to demonstrate worth and competence
- . chance for being seen favorably by teachers and peers
- . fairness and consistency in enforcement of rules
- . opportunities to belong and be useful

Influence of families

- . a sense of belonging (support and not rejection)
- . chance for being seen favorably by parents
- . opportunities to be useful in the family setting

Influence of peers

- . peer pressure toward conformity to law-abiding behavior rather than delinquency

Opportunities to work

- . credited or paid chances to do useful work or community service
- . opportunities to gain and demonstrate competence
- . opportunities to work with adults

Combining study results and research evidence yields information on which program areas have the most promise for success in Vermont.

Program areas with strong support from both study responses and research are Work/Community Service and Peer Pressure/Working with Adults. Areas strongly supported by research evidence and also receiving generally favorable support by interviewees were School and Family Relations and School Practice Changes. For Tutoring and Vocational Skills, study results were very positive, with research somewhat supportive of these program areas.

These results suggest directions to pursue in developing effective prevention programs. The programs receiving mutual support from interviewees and research represent the best areas for initial attention.

Each program area identified in the study is described below by a brief overview of the program, including assumptions on effectiveness, activities, benefits and drawbacks. Reference information for more detailed information on programs and research findings on their effectiveness can be found in the bibliography in Appendix F.

On the following pages, the program examples will be reviewed in four groupings:

1. Programs having both strong study and research support
 - (a) work and community service programs
 - (b) reducing peer pressure by working with adults
 - (c) increasing positive relationships between school and family
 - (d) changing school practice
2. Programs having strong study support and some research support
 - (a) tutoring
 - (b) development of skills to obtain employment
 - (c) strengthening family relationships

3. Programs having study support but little research support
 - (a) teaching law and law abiding behavior
 - (b) individual counseling
 - (c) recreation or "drop-in" center programs
 - (d) early identification of pre-delinquents
4. Programs with neither study nor research support
 - (a) increased security as deterrence
 - (b) increased severity of punishment as deterrence

1a. Programs Which Involve Young People in Work and Community Projects as a Way of Giving Them a Sense of Responsibility and Importance

These programs help young people to find employment or work in community service activities, and involve primarily the identification, arrangement and supervision of youth employment activities. Business and industry in the community are usually involved, and linkages to the schools and vocational centers are frequent.

This approach is based on the assumption that young people are less likely to commit delinquent acts in situations in which they have a stake and investment. This feeling of investment can occur when youth have opportunities to gain and demonstrate competence, to be useful and to belong, as in work and community service activities. The type of work activity, itself, may not be as important as: (1) how it is viewed by others; and (2) the quality of contacts with adults and other youth on and off the job. The important features include: being visibly useful to others; being involved in a productive and engaging activity; belonging as a member of that activity; exerting direct influence on one's surroundings; and gaining and applying useful skills. These features apply as readily to community service activities as to work. Research evidence strongly supports the effectiveness of this approach in preventing delinquency.

Comments from interviewees centered on the difficulty of implementing employment and service programs, referencing poor past experiences. Discussed most frequently were the red tape involved in youth work types of programs and the difficulty in setting up work situations which were not "make-work" activities. Studies of successful programs have shown that larger changes in the systems affecting youth employment (business, community, school) are often required to ensure settings which are suitable.

In addition to the usual job bank/employment placement programs, other sorts of activities and programs could include youth-operated business (e.g., youth coordinating a transportation system with adults operating vans and youth handling maintenance and scheduling, with supervision) and paid internships with local business and industry. Community service activities could include: preservation of historical artifacts; training tenants on their rights; service programs for other youths (older teens serving as Big Brothers in structured settings); youth tutoring youth; and recycling materials. One program mentioned as pertinent for youth in Vermont was jobs related to using natural resources, such as forests.

An important factor to be considered in this area is this: to productively employ the numbers of youth it would take to cause a significant reduction in delinquency, costs of great magnitude may be necessitated.

lb. Programs to Reduce Pressure of Peer Groups Toward Delinquency by Creating More Opportunities for Youth to Work With Adults

Young people are more likely to be delinquent where peer commitment is high, where adult relationships are minimal, and where peers tolerate or encourage involvement in delinquent behavior. Some successes have been shown in diverting groups of youth away from destructive activity into constructive, challenging and exciting, law-abiding activity, through peer pressure. This usually happens under the direction of adults whom young people come to respect.

Adults who are themselves invested in their community and their work tend to encourage, support and positively reinforce law-abiding behavior. Association with these adults, whether in work settings, community service activities, or other constructive activities, will have the effect of providing added encouragement to confine a youth's behavior to law-abiding activities.

Many of the people interviewed for this study mentioned the value of an adult as a role model for youth. Pragmatic implementation problems mentioned included: identifying appropriate adults who are willing and able to serve in these roles on an on-going basis; providing supervision to those adults; and providing the adults with the support they need to continue in the programs.

Once again, it is not the specific activity which is the critical factor in the success of this kind of program. Rather, it is the way in which the adults and youth interact, encouraging youth to feel competent and useful, rather than non-helpful and dependent. Activities with adults in the community, in church activities, or in business and industry can all be beneficial.

lc. Programs to Reduce Alienation and Negative Labeling by Improving Relations Between Schools and Families

Because both schools and families are regarded as important in a youth's life, the relationship between the two is significant. If little is expected of a youth or if only bad behavior is expected, then this has an important affect on how a youth views himself. These opinions and expectations are readily transferred between the two settings.

A number of problems were identified by interviewees in school and family relationships. If school personnel have a negative impression of youth (from reputation, outward appearance, family history), this impression may affect the way in which the teacher deals with the youth. Negative information concerning a youth sent home to a parent by the school can create distrust, dislike of the school, and may add tension to the relationship between parent and child. One interviewee suggested that the dislike of the school by parents can be conveyed to a youth, resulting in youth having little respect for and investment in the school. Generally these issues are supported by research findings.

Improving relations between schools and families was said by many interviewees to go directly to the causes of delinquency. Many felt that if this relationship could be enhanced, it would positively affect the youth's stake in his/her own education, school, family and self.

It was generally difficult for the interviewees to identify specific activities which could be included in a program to improve school and family relationships. Some programs which have been effective elsewhere involve the parent in school activities, are: parent-tutoring programs; parents helping with extracurricular activities; increased parental visits to the school and classes; increasing good news sent home about youth (opposite of "bad slips" sent home for unsatisfactory performance of youth); and the negotiation of individual performance or assistance contracts among the school, the youth, and the parent.

The difficulties identified in this sort of program included the potential for negative labeling of those parents of unruly youths by singling them out for strong encouragement to participate in school activities. Several officials mentioned trying this approach with less success than anticipated. They asserted that many parents felt too busy or unwilling to be involved in school activities. Additional pragmatic considerations included: lack of parental time for volunteer assistance, primarily in low-income neighborhoods, and potential union difficulties when parents begin assuming roles sometimes reserved for full-time teachers. Generally, however, those activities engaged in by parents are those for which full-time staff would not be hired anyway.

Features recommended in designing programs to involve parents can include activities or efforts which are not time-consuming for the parents, voluntary rather than mandatory or pressuring, inviting, and non-labelling.

ld. Programs to Reduce Pressures Toward Delinquency by Changing School Practices That Appear to Contribute to That Behavior

Because school factors have been found to be highly influential in producing delinquency, they are an appropriate setting for attention of delinquency prevention efforts. In reviewing some of the regular practices in schools, one finds that some practices established for useful purposes can at times be damaging to youth, and may, in fact, contribute inadvertently to delinquent behavior. These practices include: grouping students in school according to their perceived academic ability, which has a tendency to negatively label; inconsistent disciplinary procedures which have a tendency to make youth distrustful of school procedures; and lack of involvement of youth in critical decision-making at the school governing level.

The particularly appealing feature of changes in school practices is that a single, positive change, with usually only a one-time cost of manpower time to plan and implement, can be beneficial to a large and on-going number of youth.

Some of these school practices may be more conducive to change than others. These include: changing academic ability grouping practices; creating consistent and fair rules and disciplinary procedures; curriculum

changes to support the belief that all courses are valuable and to include life skills courses at all levels); changing testing, grading and feedback practices; and involving youth in some of the major decisions about the school that will affect them.

Programs which have been successful have not attempted to revise an entire school system but have started with small, manageable changes. Several interviewees who referred to their own attempts at changing school practice felt that the problems of change could be overwhelming. Others suggested that if small steps were taken, there would be the likelihood for gradual success.

Other school practice changes which have been successful in other states include: increasing activities in school which are valued or for which credit is given beyond those needed for academic competencies; emphasizing a variety of occupations necessary to society, rather than concentrating on a few high status professions as the only ways to succeed; increasing the study of and participation in community affairs; expanding opportunities for students, parents, and teachers to help administrators in decisions on the governance and operation of the school; and developing a system of discipline which is legitimate, fair, consistent, clear and recognized by all those participating in it.

2a. Programs of Individual Tutoring to Reduce the Risk of Failure and Alienation in School

The primary assumption in promoting tutoring is that children who experience failure in school will be more isolated and alienated, both academically and socially, and are therefore more likely to act out. The advantage of tutoring, therefore, is that it can help to improve school performance of an individual, which may increase that person's feeling of competence. Research findings generally support this reasoning.

Although this can be beneficial to the individual student, tutoring has some drawbacks as a full-scale delinquency prevention approach. Individual tutoring may have a high cost per student, either in direct costs for individual tutors or for costs of those supervising volunteer tutors. Tutoring is most beneficial with sufficient follow-up; without it, tutoring may have value of only limited duration.

Although tutoring may help to improve the individual's sense of competence, research has shown that failure in school alone is not an impetus to delinquency. Failure coupled with public stigma, isolation, and alienation, however, can influence delinquency. Tutoring can be most helpful when it is combined with efforts to enhance social standing in the classroom and among peers.

Many interviewees indicated that they were currently involved in tutoring programs. Others suggested that when older youth were involved in tutoring younger youth, the delinquency prevention benefits accrued to the tutors more than their students. This is a significant form of community service which is highly effective for prevention.

2b. Programs to Improve Individuals' Prospects for Employment by Teaching Specific Vocational Skills

Teaching individual vocational skills again focuses on individual treatment. The assumption is that youth with specific skills will more readily be able to become employed. Although having a job does not necessarily mean that a youth will not be delinquent, working in a productive environment can be very important. Some interviewees asserted that a youth with special skills would be less likely to get stuck in a meaningless job.

Although this type of program can have beneficial effects for some people, research findings have shown that it is not highly effective on a large scale over a significantly long period of time. Interviewees regarded this program as one place to start in efforts to positively affect youth early in life. They suggested techniques such as: starting early in a youth's development (e.g., 7th grade); teaching how to learn and how to change and adapt, rather than teaching specific skills; and promoting career education and vocational decision-making.

Related to employment programs and vocational skills development programs, interviewees suggested work-study programs which would combine actual work experience with academic credits. Such activities could give youth useful skills and actual experience, thereby making them more marketable and, importantly, making them feel competent and useful.

Interviewees and research agree that in such programs several factors are important. Interviewees highlighted two features: 1) youth participating in the programs should not be identified as lesser individuals for their participation and that efforts be made to ensure that youth selected for the program do not feel negatively singled out. This can be accomplished by allowing a wide range of youth to participate in the programs, while ensuring that youth who could most benefit would also be included. 2) The work must be regarded by others as valuable. One interviewee suggested that this was particularly true in those cases in which the work activity takes place on the school grounds in view of other students.

2c. Programs to Strengthen Family Relationships and Family Support for Law-Abiding Behavior; to Strengthen Those Aspects of Family Interaction that Lead to Positive Behavior; and to Alter Those Conditions, Circumstances and Interaction that Appear to Contribute to Delinquency

This program area was developed from suggestions made by study interviewees. It was not listed among the 12 example programs identified in the study.

The family has a major influence on the behavior of youth. Experience has shown that young people are less likely to be delinquent when they live in homes (whether intact or broken) where they are viewed favorably by parents, and other adults; where they feel that they are supported; and where they are offered opportunities to demonstrate their worth and competence.

Programs that address rejection of youth by parents and negative labeling may be expected to have a positive effect on delinquency prevention. In fact, attachments and commitments to parents (even where parents

have a record of criminal activity) have been shown in research to be an inhibitor to delinquent activity.

However, evidence on family treatment programs is mixed. Almost an equal number of research studies show decreases in delinquency, no change, and increase in delinquent activity. The prominent problem is having an effective approach for arranging family interventions as a public initiative without allowing the stigma of negative labeling to be attached to the families who are participating. Some promising approaches include increased constructive interaction between schools and families, and teaching parents new discipline approaches, communication strategies, and problem-solving. Some programs now teach effective parenting skills to youngsters in an effort to break the cycle of children of bad parents becoming bad parents themselves.

One program idea suggested by interviewees was to hold the parents equally responsible for their child's delinquent acts. Although this approach does encourage the parent to pay closer attention to the activities of the child, they may do so in a negatively authoritative manner. It is important to encourage the bonding between parents and young people since parental support appears to be so valuable in preventing delinquency.

3a. Programs to Improve Attitudes Toward Law-Abiding Behavior by Teaching Young Children About Rights, Responsibilities, and the Operations of Law

It is helpful for young people to understand all of the factors which influence their lives. Learning about the legal system will help youth to understand in what instances the law can be either helpful or damaging to them. However, there is no research evidence to show that a greater understanding of the law increases the likelihood that youth will not engage in delinquent behavior.

Although there was generally favorable response to this type of program, it was not seen as having significant promise. One interviewee suggested that kids already know what is right and what is wrong; a few lectures or one course would not have a significant effect on their knowledge of the law. Several interviewees indicated that they were involved in such programs currently, such as the "Officer Friendly" Program in Burlington, but did not have evaluation results to show the effectiveness of the program in preventing delinquency. There was significant agreement that this sort of program was useful in the educational sense, even though it was agreed that its effect on preventing delinquency could be minimal.

3b. Programs to Control or Correct Individuals' Tendencies Toward Delinquent Behavior by Providing Individual Counseling for Personal Problems

Many interviewees suggested that delinquency can be prevented by helping youth to identify and cope with personal problems, such as through counseling programs. The assumption is that effective counseling intervention prevents or changes patterns of inappropriate behavior and shows the youth other ways of dealing with problems, besides delinquent activities.

Although this approach can help individuals with personal problems, a direct correlation to delinquency has not been established. Negative labeling of clients is a recurring problem. Research results have shown

that: in some cases, delinquency has been reduced through counseling; in many cases, there has been no effect; and in some situations individual counseling seemed to result in increased delinquent activity (notably illustrated in the Cambridge-Somerville Study--see bibliography).

An important feature of individualized programs such as counseling is cost. This is particularly pertinent, considering the additional cost of long-term follow-up which appears to be critical for success. Although this type of program can be beneficial to selected individuals, it is not an appropriate, long-range, broad impact approach for delinquency prevention.

3c. Programs to Reduce the Opportunity for Delinquent Activity by Expanding Facilities and Opportunities for "Something To Do", for example, Recreation

Common sense dictates that if young people do not have activities to be involved in and places to go, they are left with time and energy which leads to boredom and restlessness. This is often seen as giving them the time and inclination to become involved in delinquent activities. Research evidence, however, has shown that neither planned activities nor drop-in center-based programs prevent youth from committing delinquent acts.

Although many interviewees in the study generally approved of this sort of program, they also highlighted its limitations, citing the fact that, once again, it does not deal with the root causes of delinquency. This highlights again the importance of distinguishing between programs which can be beneficial to youth in general, and those which are specifically designed to prevent delinquency.

One solution to this situation was the suggestion to use recreational activities to promote the sorts of attitudes and activities which appear to prevent delinquency. Older kids supervising the activities of younger kids is, in fact, a form of community service by the older kids. This gives them a chance to gain respect, develop new skills on how to work effectively with people, develop a sense of being part of the recreational facility.

Several interviewees suggested the usefulness of drop-in centers, such as coffee houses, community centers and pin ball areas. Again, these would only be useful in preventing delinquency if there were very distinct features about them which were designed to promote interaction with adults in a constructive activity rather than just killing time. There must be opportunities for the youth to increase their feelings of competency and usefulness in law-abiding activities. In addition, young people who visit drop-in centers return to those environments which may promote their acting out behavior.

Another suggestion related to the free time youth have was a program to teach people how to use their spare time. The assumption was that if kids were taught how to use their time constructively, they would stay out of trouble. Although few programs of this sort have been evaluated, it appears that there are some difficulties. These include: the unknown effectiveness in preventing delinquent acts; getting kids involved; avoiding negative labeling for participation in such a program; and ensuring follow-up. Again, the problems of limited range of participants, limited impact if not continuously monitored, high cost, and potentially limited effectiveness, suggest this is not a program for major attention.

3d. Programs to Control or Correct Troublesome Behavior by the Early Identification and Treatment of "Predelinquents"

This type of program would require teachers, parents and others to identify individual youth as pre-delinquent, based on their behavior or personality factors to ensure that these individuals receive appropriate services at an early age.

It is, however, extremely difficult to accurately identify those factors which can predict delinquency. Other disadvantages include the possibility of incorrect diagnosis and the affects of negative labeling. "Labeling and Social Reaction Theory" suggests that there is more than a slight possibility that once a child gets pointed out as being "bad" in school records, subsequent reactions of teachers become colored by this initial judgment. In addition, the offender's own self attitudes and views of others may be influenced by his perception of their opinion of him, and he reacts accordingly. The label itself becomes a force contributing to further misconduct.

Although this program idea received fairly strong support from many people in the survey, many of their comments indicated that some of the positive feeling for this type of program had more to do with the concept of helping before delinquent acts are committed, rather than helping "after the fact", and less to do with the pre-identification aspect of the program.

4a. Programs to Deter Wrong-Doing By Tighter Security in Neighborhoods or Schools

The assumption upon which this program is based is, by limiting access to property or material goods, youth will have greater difficulty in reaching them and will therefore commit fewer delinquent acts. Interviewees generally rejected this program approach because it did not address the root causes of delinquency. Other disadvantages of this approach mentioned by interviewees included: "It is impossible to lock everything up." "It is a reactive approach." "It is not long-term and it is too costly." Several interviewees asserted that a responsive community should have positive activities rather than a negatively reactive approach. "By locking things up, you are telling people that you are expecting them to do you damage." Both the study results and research evidence reject this as an effective means of delinquency prevention.

4b. Programs to Deter Wrong-Doing by Increasing the Severity of Punishment

Harsh punishment has long been assumed to be an effective deterrent to actions which are not socially acceptable. The assumption is that the threat of severe punishment will prevent youth from initially committing delinquent acts. Recent studies have shown, however, that severity of punishment is not an effective deterrent to illegal activity of youth. In fact, there does not appear to be any evidence that the use of any sort of punishment actually prevents delinquency.

A frequent comment of the interviewees was that consistency of punishment could yield a certain respect and, therefore, tend to reduce delinquent

acts. Research evidence supports this concept. The perceived fairness of rules, and consistency and fairness of enforcement, do appear to be influential in reducing delinquency.

Additional suggestions on program ideas from interviewees

- . Youth involvement in community decision-making and law changes, especially those affecting youth;
- . Youth involvement in the planning, implementation, management and evaluation of programs intended to meet the needs of youth;
- . Activities which enable youth to identify and examine the skills they use when they are doing the things they enjoy;
- . Providing ways for coordination and cooperation between human service agencies.

In reviewing these program areas and activities which could be involved in the programs, a number of important features common to any successful delinquency prevention program have been identified. Combined study results and research findings suggest that effective delinquency prevention programs have the following features:

- . provide opportunities for youth to demonstrate worth and competence, be useful, be seen favorably by adults and peers, feel a sense of belonging
- . promote youth having a stake in their community and in themselves
- . not be corrective or treatment oriented
- . not single out individual youth for attention, thereby negatively labeling them
- . have the capacity to affect the largest number of youth for the most extended period of time
- . concentrate on the areas of schools and meaningful work/community service, and include the positive influence of parents/families and peers.

IV. WHAT EFFORTS COULD BE UNDERTAKEN AT THE STATE LEVEL TO HELP DELINQUENCY?

The Legislature and State agencies greatly influence delinquency prevention activities of communities in Vermont. They enact the laws which dictate what activity is deemed delinquent, determine who among the localities will receive funding allocable by the State, and regulate the expenditure of funds for certain types of programs. Some of these activities involve the direct expenditure of money, some involve a one-time cost (e.g., enacting new legislation); and others require the expenditure of money for State agency staff to work in ways which are beneficial directly to a community (e.g., providing technical assistance).

In this study interviewees were asked to consider the ways in which State-level people affect delinquency prevention efforts and to consider improvements which could be made at the State level. From a list of nine alternatives, they were asked to recommend actions and make additional suggestions. The usefulness in reviewing these activities is to focus primarily on those efforts which were most strongly supported, and upon which a concentration of energy would be most fruitful in the future.

The three types of State level efforts receiving strongest support (between 65% and 75%) from the interviewees were:

1. Formulate clear policy that establishes direction for funding and define agency roles.
2. Establish a mechanism for joint sponsorship and funding of promising approaches.

Receiving a moderate amount of support (59% to 62%) were:

1. Introduce legislation
2. Ensure rigorous evaluation of delinquency prevention programs.
3. Offer opportunities for local agencies and groups to air their concerns and views on prevention with State Agencies.
4. Offer opportunities for local agencies to influence the development of delinquency prevention guidelines, policies, and legislation which affect them.
5. Set aside some funds for testing new approaches.

Fewer than three percent of the interviewees chose the following:

1. No actions recommended because delinquency prevention should not be a State priority.
2. No actions recommended because the current arrangements are sufficient.

The area for increased effort mentioned most frequently was the clarification of the policies on: (a) funding and (b) roles for supporting delinquency prevention. Attention has been focused on responsibilities after a delinquent act has occurred: who arrests? who adjudicates? who detains? who corrects?

But the responsibility for preventing delinquent acts is assumed to be spread among a variety of agencies related to justice, education, social services, and mental and physical health.

This confusion is evident in terms of funding guidelines and defined roles. Often it is unclear what proportion of agency funding is intended for delinquency prevention as opposed to other activities.

There is additional confusion over which agencies or others have the authority to initiate or support delinquency prevention efforts. No legislation in the area of delinquency prevention was identified in the study, and many interviewees suggested the need for legislation that would define agency roles in this regard.

Some interviewees suggested that it would be helpful to have a centralized coordinating function to ensure that roles, activities and responsibilities are neither overlapping nor nonexistent. This could be accomplished by an existing board or council, a specially-convened task group, or other combination of state/local, agency/organization, executive/legislative mixture. Others suggested that this would be an unnecessary addition to the existing bureaucracy. They suggested instead that each agency review its own roles, discuss with other agencies their perceptions of their roles, and together clearly formulate each agency's roles and responsibilities.

The second strong recommendation was to increase joint efforts among agencies and organizations at both State and local levels to support prevention including: joint sponsorship, funding, technical assistance, planning and coordination. State and local co-partnerships were highly recommended. One high level official suggested that there was a need among agencies to understand each other's tasks and "develop a simple system of talking with each other."

While categories indicating legislative changes received a significant number of positive responses from interviewees, specific recommendations for delinquency prevention, beyond defining agency roles, were minimal. Some specific recommendations included: decriminalizing unmanageable youth and eliminating status offenses; establishing a family court system; and developing legislation which would allow more funding for CETA programs and for new testing of experimental programs.

In the remaining areas recommended by the interviewees (clustered around a 60% show of support), additional comments included the following:

In developing better evaluations, interviewees suggested that it would be preferable to concentrate on outcomes rather than activities. Impact-or-results-oriented evaluations were recommended to supplement process evaluations.

Several interviewees at the State level suggested that mechanisms for interacting and sharing ideas with localities were already in place and just needed to be acted upon. Local interviewees frequently mentioned that lack of such mechanisms, their lack of visibility and support when they do exist, and lack of ease in using them. Several local interviewees said that more lines of communication were needed, but this was not a high level concern for them.

One agency official suggested that funding new approaches was easier for the Legislature than it was for individual State agencies and recommended that the Legislature take a more active role in seeking effective programs for Vermont.

Several State and local interviewees suggested that although the best programs involved "self-help", programs operated and funded at the local level, there might be a place for State support of those efforts through the provision of technical assistance, help in designing an appropriate evaluation plan, and other similar activities.

In summary, the following recommendations were made:

-Regarding the lack of clarity on responsibility for delinquency prevention, clarify each relevant agency's role in preventing delinquency within its current mandate. This would also include a clarification of policy for funding efforts which have as a goal the reduction of delinquent acts.

-Establish a primary, coordinating authority (agency, task force or other) to serve as a focal point for Vermont's delinquency prevention activities.

-Promote joint agency sponsorship and funding as a vehicle for:
(a) applying various disciplines, each uniquely valuable to an effective delinquency prevention effort; (b) providing adequate funding when resources from a single agency may be insufficient; (c) promoting interaction between agencies which may lead to a reduction in both duplication and gaps of service.

-The Legislature should help to ensure that some of the program ideas most strongly supported in this report receive appropriate attention. Possibilities for Legislative action should include: further Agency role clarification; establishment of a coordinating entity; funding of experimental programs; funding of sophisticated evaluation design; as well as other areas.

There are a variety of possibilities for State-level delinquency prevention action, ranging from assisting localities to implement their own delinquency prevention efforts, to reducing barriers to State agency interaction for more integrated planning. Actions supported in this study may be expected to be most readily received by people in Vermont and, therefore, pose the fewest coordination and implementation difficulties. These will have the highest probability for success.

APPENDIX A

STUDY METHODOLOGY

In selecting interviewees for the study, the intent was to get a cross section of thought to ensure that a variety of experiences and perspectives of the people involved with youth were included in the study.

Interviewees were selected at both the State and local levels and included: members of the Legislature; people involved in the educational system; various employment and employment training programs; law enforcement and juvenile justice; social services; health and mental health service delivery systems.

State agency personnel interviewed came from departments within the Agency of Human Services (14 people) and divisions within the Department of Education (9 people). (See Appendix B for complete listing of agencies.)

Selection of the six communities for participation in this study was based on factors such as referrals to Weeks School, court intake rates, and population (mix of large and small communities). These communities were: Brandon, Brattleboro, Burlington, Newport, Randolph and Windsor.

An average of 16 people were interviewed in each community. The categories of interviewees included: the Legislature, schools, local government, police and legal authorities, community services, and local offices of Social and Rehabilitation Services and Mental Health. (See Appendix C for additional detail.)

Preparation for conducting the study began with the design of the interview guide. An introductory letter was sent to those selected for participation in the study, followed by a telephone call to schedule an appointment. Interviews were generally conducted in person; when this could not be arranged, however, interviews took place by telephone. Of the 120 people contacted for participation in the study, 117 interviews actually took place (23 State level and 94 community level). The results of the close-ended and open-ended questions were then tabulated to be used in the preparation of this report.

The size of the sample was not designed to be large enough to allow statistically valid comparisons between State and local, different State agencies, or different professions, and no such comparisons between State and local, different State agencies, or different professions, and no such comparisons appear in this report. In those instances where viewpoints are dramatically different, these differences are noted.

APPENDIX B

STATE AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN PREVENTION STUDY

Agency of Human Services

- Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
- Social Services Division
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
- Vocational Rehabilitation Division
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Health
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Office
- Department of Corrections

Department of Education

- Division of Vocational Education
- Federal Assistance
- Elementary and Secondary Education
- Special Education

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWEE CATEGORIES

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED</u>
LEGISLATURE	Member of the Vermont General Assembly (House and Senate) who live in these communities (emphasis in selection on members of the following committees: Education, Health and Welfare, Judiciary, and Appropriations)	12
SCHOOL	Public School Administrators including Superintendants and Junior High and High School Principals	19
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Local government officials including mayors, town managers, boards of selectmen and similar authorities	14
POLICE	Police Chiefs and Juvenile Officers	9
LEGAL	Legal authorities including States Attorneys, Public Defenders, District Court Judges	18
SERVICE PROVIDERS	Community service providers in areas of youth services and prevention	10
SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES	Personnel in local office of Social and Rehabilitation Services (usually Director)	7
MENTAL HEALTH	Personnel in local office of Mental Health (usually Director)	5
TOTAL COMMUNITY LEVEL INTERVIEWEES		94

APPENDIX D
 PREVENTION STUDY
 INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

Name of respondent _____
 Title _____
 Agency _____
 Address _____
 Phone _____
 Level: state ____ local ____
 Interview mode: site ____ phone ____
 Date _____

First, I'd like to get your view of the size and seriousness of the delinquency problem here.

1. How would you compare the level of delinquent activity here with:

a. Other (states/communities) about this size?

Delinquency problem is <u>greater</u>	About the same	Delinquency problem is <u>less</u>
3	2	1

b. Five years ago in this (state/community)?

Delinquency problem is <u>greater</u>	About the same	Delinquency problem is <u>less</u>
3	2	1

2. How serious would you say the delinquency problem is in this (state/community)?

5	4	3	2	1
Delinquency problem is <u>very serious</u> and delinquency prevention calls for clear policy and more resources.			Delinquency problem is <u>negligible</u> and delinquency prevention does not call for more policy or resources.	

Now I'd like to turn to some questions about what can be done to prevent delinquency, that is, to prevent kids' getting into trouble in the first place and to prevent their coming into contact with police and courts.

3. There are several arguments about what causes delinquency and what we would have to change in order to prevent or reduce delinquent behavior. From your own knowledge and experience, what three causes of delinquency appear to be the most powerful? (Interviewer: probe for specifics).

Which of these causes is most powerful? The next? The third most powerful?

4. Some of the things that influence delinquency are not easily changed or eliminated. What areas of a young person's life can be most practically and effectively influenced by state or locally funded programs of delinquency prevention?

5. Here are several program approaches to delinquency prevention that have been tried here or in other states. I'd like you to give me your judgment about three issues related to each of these approaches. First, please tell me whether you believe this approach to be a desirable and appropriate approach (a good idea, aimed at major causes, regardless of how easy or hard it may be). Second, please tell me how feasible and practical the approach appears (how easy or hard it would be to implement, apart from money). And third, please tell me what response you believe your agency would make to this approach if it were proposed.

Response format for all program description items, handed to respondent on card:

APPROPRIATENESS					FEASIBILITY				
Good approach -- gets at major causes		Poor approach -- not aimed at major causes			Would be possible here		Would be very difficult here		
5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

AGENCY RESPONSE				
Would like to participate	Would endorse	No opinion	Would discourage	Would oppose
5	4	3	2	1

PROGRAM APPROACHES:

- a. Programs of individual tutoring to reduce the risk of failure and alienation in school.
- b. Programs to deter wrongdoing by increasing the severity of punishment.
- c. Programs to increase the stake young people have in approved behavior by improving and expanding opportunities for work or community service.
- d. Programs to deter wrongdoing by tighter security in neighborhoods or schools.
- e. Programs to reduce alienation and negative labeling by improving relations between schools and families.
- f. Programs to control or correct troublesome behavior by the early identification and treatment of "predelinquents."
- g. Programs to reduce pressure of peers toward delinquency by influencing peer relations and/or interactions between youth and adults.

h. Programs to improve attitudes toward law-abiding behavior by teaching young children about rights, responsibilities and the operations of law.

i. Programs to enhance individuals' prospects for employment by teaching specific vocational skills.

j. Programs to reduce the opportunity for delinquent activity by expanding facilities and opportunities for "something to do," e.g., recreation.

k. Programs to control or correct individuals' tendencies toward delinquent behavior by providing individual counseling for personal problems.

l. Programs to reduce pressure toward delinquency by changing school practices (e.g., tracking) that appear to contribute to that behavior.

There are efforts already being made in Vermont to prevent troublesome behavior, and to lower the chances that children will engage in delinquent acts. On the grounds that it makes sense to build on our present strengths, I'd like you to give me your observations of programs in Vermont that you have confidence in and would like to see supported.

6. First, what programs presently operated (or sponsored) by your agency do you believe offer the greatest promise for reducing or preventing troublesome behavior?

Do you have any reports, program descriptions, evaluations or catalogues that would help us to become better informed about what is already being tried by your (agency/community)?

7. Second, can you tell me about other strong programs or efforts in the (state/community) that you consider promising efforts in delinquency prevention? (Interviewer: these are to be programs not operated by the respondent's agency). Please say as specifically as you can why you have confidence in these programs.

8. Now I'd like to ask about those improvements that could be made at the state level to improve delinquency prevention. Which of the actions listed on this card would you recommend? (Record as many suggestions as the respondent offers).

a. Introduce legislation (to _____)

b. Formulate clear policy that establishes direction for funding and defines agency role(s).

- c. Offer opportunities for local agencies and groups to air their concerns and views on prevention with state agencies.
- d. Offer opportunities for local agencies to influence the development of delinquency prevention legislation, guidelines and policies that affect them.
- e. Insure rigorous evaluation of delinquency prevention programs.
- f. Establish a mechanism for joint sponsorship and funding of promising approaches.
- g. Set aside some funds for testing new approaches.
- h. No actions recommended because delinquency prevention should not be a state priority.
- i. No actions recommended because the current arrangements are sufficient.
- j. Other _____

Of the suggestions you made above, which two should receive most immediate attention in the next year?

I'd also like to ask for your judgment about the general level of concern for delinquency prevention in your agency (organization) and in this (state/community).

9. Compared to all other concerns and issues, what would you say is the present level of concern in this (state/community) about delinquency and delinquency prevention?

High concern

There is high media coverage and high pressure for action.

5

4

3

2

1

Low concern

Delinquency issues take a back seat to other concerns.

10. Compared to all other responsibilities of your organization, what priority would you say is placed on programs to reduce or prevent troublesome behavior?

High priority

This area would be among first to expand if we had more resources.

5

4

3

2

1

Low priority

This area would be among last to expand if we had more resources.

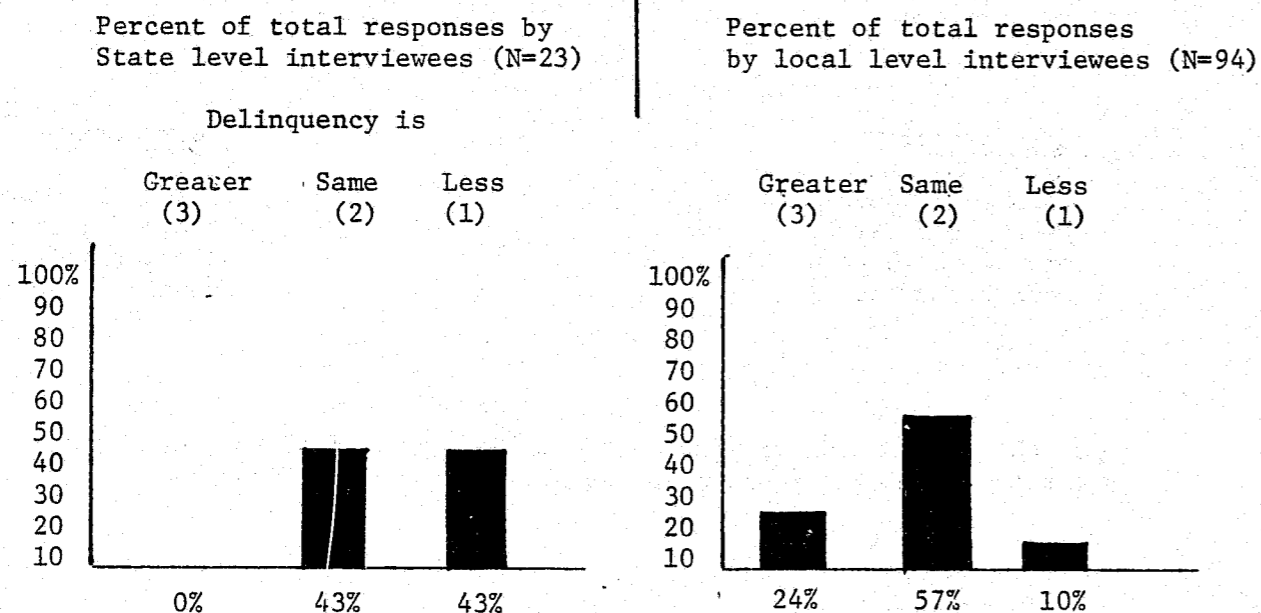
11. What proportion of your agency's resources would you estimate is spent to conduct or sponsor delinquency prevention efforts?

- 1) 0 - 10%
- 2) 11-25%
- 3) 26-50%
- 4) 51-75%
- 5) 76-100%

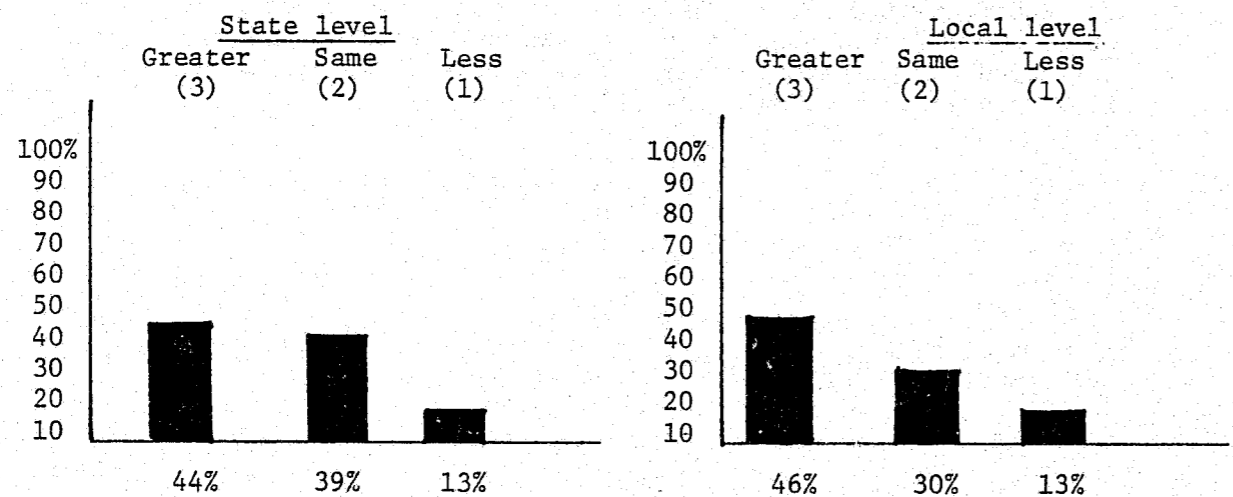
12. Before we finish, I'd like to give you a chance to introduce any other suggestions, observations or comments that you may have about delinquency prevention, either in the areas we've already covered or in some area that we may have left out.

APPENDIX E -- Graphs for Chapter II

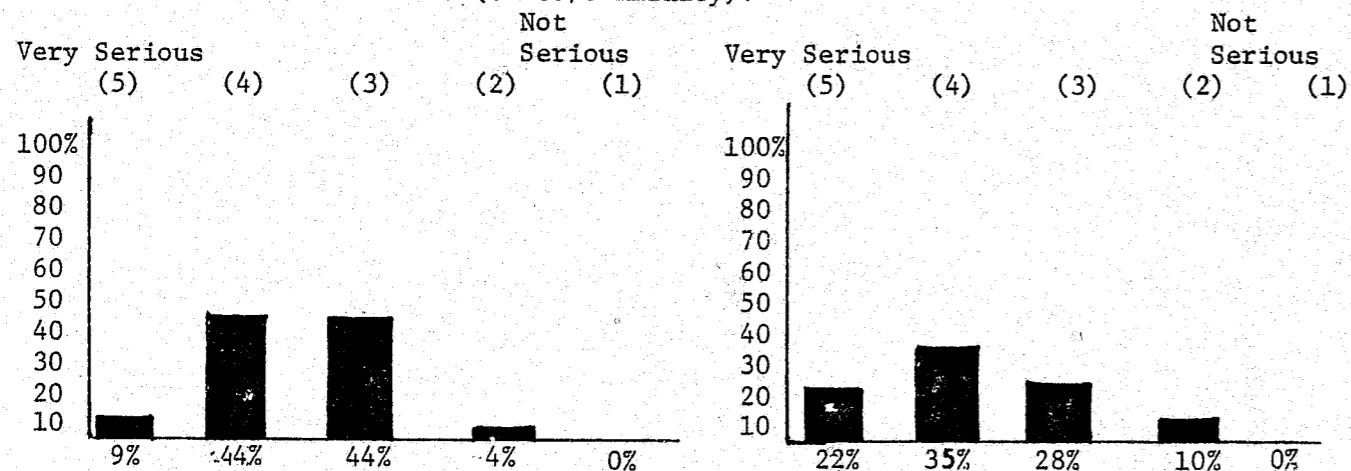
Question 1a: How would you compare the level of delinquent activity here with other (States/communities) about this size?



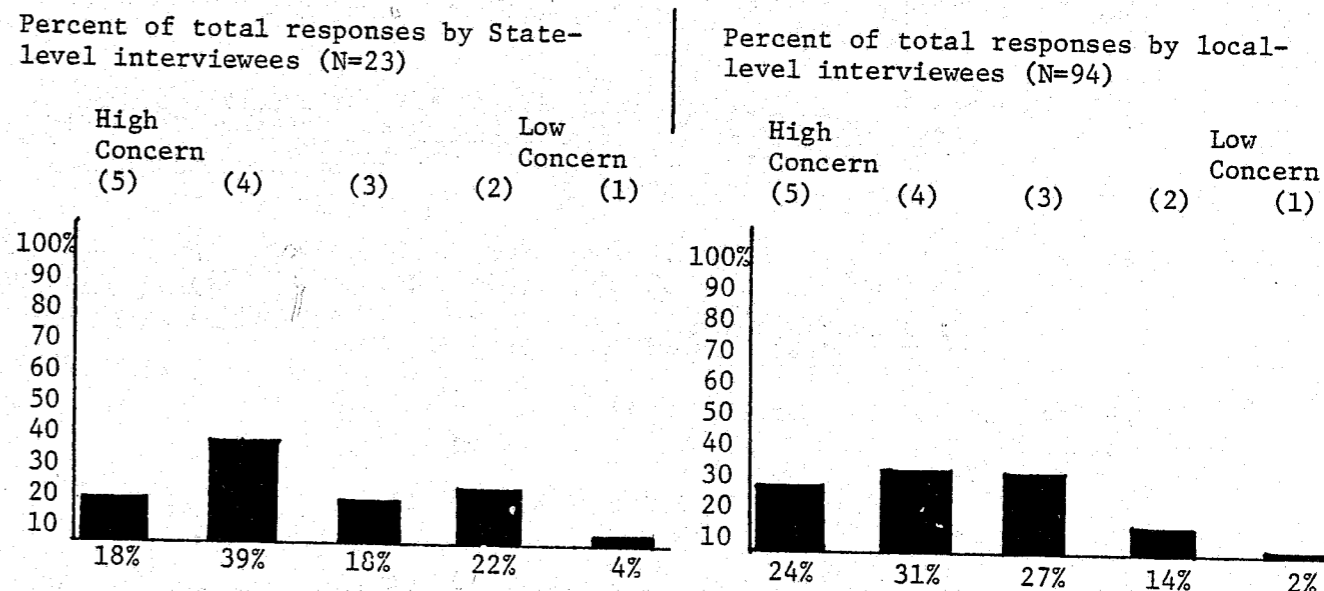
Question 1b: How would you compare the level of delinquent activity here with the way it was five years ago in this state/community?



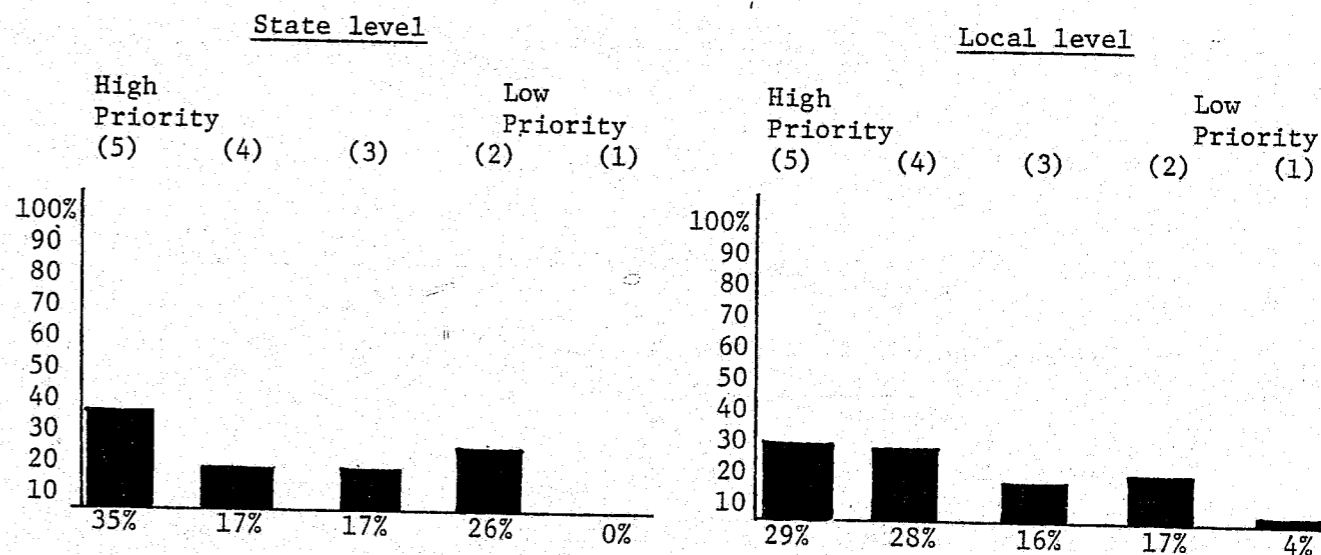
Question 2: How serious would you say the delinquency problem is in this (state/community)?



Question 9: Compared to all other concerns and issues, what would you say is the present level of concern in this (state/community) about delinquency and delinquency prevention?



Question 10: Compared to all other responsibilities of your agency, what priority would you say is placed on programs to reduce or prevent troublesome behavior?



APPENDIX F

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