
INTRODUCTION

“America has both the knowledge and the money we need to substantially reduce adolescent crime and youth violence. We have the know-how to reduce the number of young people likely to join the next generation of adult criminals. Better yet, we can likely achieve this goal at a cost no greater (and perhaps considerably less) than what we will spend if current juvenile justice policies and programs remain in place.”

**Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime,
What Works – and What Doesn’t**
(Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, June 2000)

During the 1990s, juvenile crime pierced the national consciousness. Delinquency and youth violence soared to new heights early in the decade. Alarming stories about juvenile “superpredators” and a “ticking time bomb” of adolescent crime haunted the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*. Then the school shootings in Jonesboro and Paducah and at Columbine High shook the nation. Even a sharp decline in juvenile delinquency and violence since the early 1990s has not lessened Americans’ continuing sense of alarm.

In June 2000, the American Youth Policy Forum and six national partner organizations published a report analyzing America’s youth crime challenge at the turn of the millennium and assessing the effectiveness of new and existing juvenile crime policies nationwide. The report, entitled *Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works – and What Doesn’t*, found reason for great optimism. Juvenile justice experts and practitioners have developed an array of effective tools over the past two decades with proven power to reduce violence and other lawbreaking by adolescents.

The report also revealed causes for grave concern. Responding to public demand for action against youth crime, our nation’s political leaders have responded aggressively to the perceived crisis. Virtually every state has enacted sweeping new laws since 1992 – erecting new correctional facilities, imposing procedures to shift more accused youth to adult criminal courts, and launching a bevy of new juvenile justice and youth crime prevention programs.

Unfortunately, many of the so-called “reforms” enacted in recent years have ignored the real causes for delinquency and neglected the promising cures. Many states have embraced tough-sounding strategies that appeal to voters but don’t work, and most have failed to address longstanding weaknesses and imbalances in our nation’s juvenile justice institutions.

Reducing the situation to a simple metaphor, scholars and practitioners have blazed a promising new trail toward progress in reigning in America’s adolescent crime problem – a trail leading to less crime, lower costs, and fewer lost youth. Yet many of our nation’s policymakers are instead marching full steam ahead in other directions – directions fraught with alarming costs and inevitable failure both for protecting the public and for maximizing success among troubled youth.

EIGHT CHALLENGES FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

This report follows up on *Less Hype, More Help* by focusing more squarely on the critical needs and problems facing juvenile justice efforts nationwide. Specifically, the report spotlights eight cross-cutting challenges – both to take advantage of new opportunities created by advances in research and practice, and to overcome commonplace problems that now cripple America’s efforts to reduce delinquent offending and steer troubled youth away from crime. These challenges include:

1. Reducing Overreliance on Incarceration for Non-Dangerous Youthful Offenders
2. Developing a Continuum of Community-Based Sanctions and Interventions for Delinquent but Non-Dangerous Youth
3. Employing Research-Proven Program Strategies to Reduce Delinquency
4. Identifying and Intervening Intensively With Youth at Extreme Risk for Chronic Delinquency
5. Providing Comprehensive Support to Youth With Behavioral Disturbances
6. Ensuring Quality Treatment and Youth Development Services for Incarcerated Youth
7. Providing Quality Education and Career Development Services to Help Youth Outgrow Delinquency and Assume Productive Roles in Society
8. Reducing Inappropriate Detention for Youth Awaiting Trial or Pending Placement

For each of these challenges, this report highlights one or more existing programs, policies or initiatives that show how the challenge can be (and is being) met successfully at the state and local levels. (See table on pages 4-7.) ***By putting research into***

practice, employing best practice reforms, creating better incentives, improving multi-agency cooperation, and eliminating inefficiency, each of the guiding light programs is demonstrating that success is possible in juvenile justice. Recidivism can be lowered. Teen crime rates can be reduced. More positive outcomes for high-risk youth can be achieved.

LESS COST, MORE SAFETY AND SUCCESS

As the following pages will detail, guiding lights programs not only produce far better outcomes than are now commonplace in juvenile justice systems nationwide. They also yield vast savings for taxpayers.

Most of the model initiatives profiled in this report achieve their notable successes for a price significantly lower than what more conventional programs currently spend on failure. Even those with high price-tags are proving cost-effective because they frequently solve problems the first time, rather than failing repeatedly and ensuring that youths return to the justice system and require repeated confinement.

Spend less, achieve more safety and more youth success: that is the opportunity available to America in juvenile justice reform – if we demonstrate the energy and resourcefulness and dedication to put our knowledge into practice.

Challenge	Exemplary Response	Critical Characteristics
<p>No. 1</p> <p>Over-reliance on Incarceration</p>	<p>Missouri Division of Youth Services (State of Missouri)</p>	<p>Statewide system based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ small-scale residential facilities (rather than training schools) ◆ extensive 24-hour/day therapy ◆ quality education programs ◆ heavy family outreach/counseling ◆ well-qualified, highly-trained staff ◆ extensive non-residential programming and aftercare support
<p>No. 2</p> <p>Continuum of Community Sanctions and Interventions</p>	<p>Tarrant County Juvenile Services (Tarrant County TX)</p>	<p>County Probation Agency with :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ limited number of locked pre-trial detention beds ◆ extensive array of non-residential sanctions, including advocate programs, family preservation, and community service-restitution ◆ strong partnerships with community-based service providers ◆ limited use of confinement and residential treatment
<p>No. 3</p> <p>Research-Based Program Models</p>	<p>Youth Villages (Memphis, TN)</p>	<p>Private non-profit agency serving youth with emotional and behavioral disorders (including many delinquents), providing a continuum of residential and non-residential care, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Multi-systemic Therapy, a highly effective home-based, family-focused mental health intervention ◆ Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, another highly effective, research-based treatment model
<p>No. 4</p> <p>Youth at Extreme Risk</p>	<p>“8 Percent Solution” (Orange County, CA)</p>	<p>County probation program aimed at reducing the number of chronic juvenile offenders by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identifying the characteristics of youth at highest risk to become chronic juvenile offenders ◆ screening all first-time offenders to identify those with highest probability to become chronic offenders ◆ enrolling potential chronic offenders in an intensive day treatment program including family therapy, substance abuse counseling, remedial academic education, and case management

Evidence of Effectiveness	Other Noteworthy Responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Far lower recidivism rates than most other state juvenile corrections agencies. 2. Far smaller budget than juvenile corrections agencies in other states. 	<p>Reclaim Ohio – Statewide funding reform to reward counties for treating juvenile offenders locally and preventing excessive commitments to state training schools.</p> <p>California Youth Authority – New sliding scale funding formula requiring counties to pay a large share of the costs for non-serious offenders committed to state custody.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substantial reductions in juvenile crime and violence. 2. 90-day failure rate for probation programs lower than most large urban counties in Texas. 3. County’s long-term recidivism for youth served in local probation programs is second lowest among Texas’ large urban counties. 	<p>San Diego County – Developed comprehensive strategy including programs to prevent the onset of delinquency and non-residential programming to reverse delinquent behavior before juvenile offenders commit serious crimes and require incarceration or transfer to adult courts.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only agency in the nation to replicate these two state-of-the-art treatment models. 2. Using these models, substantially increased long-term success of troubled youth compared with traditional residential treatment programs used previously. 3. Achieving greater success at a far lower cost per participant than residential treatment. 	<p>Washington State’s Community Juvenile Accountability Act – A grant program to local juvenile courts for replication of delinquency program strategies with proven power to reduce re-offending cost-effectively.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Just 49% of youth in initial pilot were re-arrested within 1 year, vs. 93% arrest rate for youth with identical characteristics in an earlier study. 2. In a controlled evaluation, youth who completed the program suffered two or more subsequent arrests 29% less often than youth randomly assigned to a control group. 3. “8%” youth also had fewer arrests, fewer court petitions, and spent fewer days in confinement than control group youth. 	<p>Repeat Offender Prevention Project – State-funded project to support the “8 Percent” program and other early intervention programs in 7 additional California jurisdictions, with a controlled evaluation design to measure the programs’ impact scientifically.</p>

Challenge	Exemplary Response	Critical Characteristics
<p>No. 5</p> <p>Youth With Behavioral Disturbances</p>	<p>Wraparound Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, WI)</p>	<p>County mental health program to reduce out-of-home treatment for disturbed (and often delinquent) youth using pooled funding (\$28 million/year) from county juvenile probation, child welfare, and mental health agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ comprehensive home-based services ◆ intensive case-management ◆ strength-based treatment philosophy ◆ extensive service-provider network ◆ mobile treatment team for crisis management and prevention of admissions to psychiatric hospitals
<p>No. 6</p> <p>Chronic and Violent Youth Offenders</p>	<p>Florida Environmental Institute (Glades County, FL)</p>	<p>Small, privately-operated correctional facility for serious and violent youth offenders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ working ranch located in the Florida everglades, with no locked cells or restraints ◆ high staff-to-offender ratio and close staff-offender relationships ◆ intensive behavior management (reward/punishments for good/bad behavior) ◆ extensive chores and work activities as well as in-depth educational programming ◆ intensive aftercare support for six months
<p>No. 7</p> <p>Quality Education and Career Development for Delinquent Youth</p>	<p>Gulf Coast Trades Center (New Waverly, TX)</p>	<p>Residential corrections facility using vocational training as a primary strategy to rehabilitate juvenile offenders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ all students enrolled in one of 9 career tracks, each with a 915-hour applied curriculum ◆ students receive two hours/day of academic instruction ◆ most students participate in paid work experience on campus, in community agencies, or in new low-income housing construction ◆ intensive aftercare, including job search/jobplacement assistance
<p>No. 8</p> <p>Juvenile Detention Reform</p>	<p>Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan (King County, WA)</p>	<p>Comprehensive analysis of county juvenile justice operations in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ reduce overcrowding at juvenile detention centers ◆ eliminate need for construction and operation of added detention beds ◆ identify alternative programs/policies to improve outcomes for juvenile offenders and reduce juvenile offending rates

Evidence of Effectiveness	Other Noteworthy Responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduced use of residential treatment from 360 youth per day to 135 per day. 2. Reduced psychiatric hospitalizations of children/adolescents by 80 percent. 3. Reduced arrests of delinquent youth participants by more than 70 percent from year prior to year after treatment. 4. Substantially improved participants' behavioral functioning as measured by mental health assessments. 	<p>See Youth Villages (Challenge #3)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recidivism rate has averaged 15.8 percent from 1997-2000, compared to recidivism rates of >40 percent for youth in other Florida residential corrections programs. 2. Despite longer stays and higher cost per day than most Florida training schools, the program ranks among the most cost-effective in the state for high-risk offenders due to far higher success rates. 	<p>Ferris School – The new Delaware training school built in the 1990s after years of litigation over substandard conditions and inadequate programming in an older facility. “New Ferris” offers high quality education and other programming – a dramatic improvement over past practice.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recidivism rates are far below those of other moderate security facilities – and more than 30% below “expected recidivism” based on risk profile of participants. 2. Sixty percent of graduates find paid employment in their chosen occupational fields, with average starting wage of \$7.50. 3. Sixty percent earn GEDs. 	<p>Fresh Start – Baltimore-based day program that teaches delinquent youth boat building and other vocational skills as part of comprehensive, 40-week (plus aftercare) rehabilitation strategy. Most graduates are employed, and fewer than one-fifth are re-arrested.</p>
<p>County adopted master plan in August 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ new policies/procedures/programs established to prevent unnecessary placements into detention and reduce lengths of stay; ◆ average detention population down 30 percent since January 1999; ◆ construction of new detention facility on hold indefinitely; ◆ some funds not used for construction invested in state-of-the-art intervention programs for high risk offenders and their families. 	<p>Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative – Multi-million dollar project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that enabled three local jurisdictions to reduce overcrowding in juvenile detention, develop sound alternatives-to-detention programs, and streamline case processing to reduce unnecessarily long stays in detention for youthful offenders.</p>