



National Institute of Justice

Research Preview

Jeremy Travis, Director

August 1997

Youth Afterschool Programs and Law Enforcement

A Summary of a Presentation by Marcia Chaiken, Ph.D.

Comprehensive child development relies on the supports, relationships, and activities available to children at home, at school, and in the community. However, from early adolescence through the mid-teenage years, peer influence competes with that of family, and about 60 percent of a youth's waking hours are spent outside of school. Thus, an opportunity to significantly affect the direction and quality of young lives resides in the community.

Recent findings show that children and teens are most vulnerable either to committing or being a victim of crime between 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Community organizations with afterschool youth development programs are particularly well positioned to counter some of the hazards that threaten children, particularly urban adolescents: drug abuse, gang activity, and criminal involvement or victimization.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York jointly supported a national survey of youth-serving organizations to discover the dimensions of crime affecting these organizations during nonschool hours and what approaches they are using to prevent such crime. The survey, conducted by LINC and seven national youth organizations and their local affiliates, found that local affiliates of national organizations are serving many children and teenagers who are at high risk for crime and delinquency and, to the extent that these local affiliates are themselves imperiled by crime and violence, they are likely to enlist police assistance in implementing prevention programs.

Survey Methods

Questionnaires were sent to a stratified random sample of more than 1,000 program directors and volunteers, with a 47-percent response rate. The principal reason for nonresponse was high staff turnover. About half the responding organizations were in big cities with high crime rates, about one-quarter were in big cities with relatively low crime rates, and one-quarter came from small cities and towns. The majority of organizations were providing programs in youth centers or clubs, churches or other religious facilities, and schools.

Findings

What children need and want. Previous research has shown that the most successful programs are those that address comprehensive child and adolescent development, which rests on the guidance and bonds that children may find at home, at school, and in the community. However, in communities where many children have fewer supports at home and school, there are also fewer youth-serving organizations in the neighborhoods to meet their needs. Whether teens and children live in inner cities or smaller towns, they told researchers they want afterschool programs that provide challenging activities and a chance to contribute to their communities. Young people prefer programs that provide a range of choices—sports and recreation, activities that bolster their educational and social skills, activities that increase their ability to say “No” when faced with temptation, and computer and other technical instruction. They also want

places where they can be safe during afterschool hours—where there are no gangs, weapons, or crime.

The survey found that national youth-serving organizations are recruiting children and teens who are at high risk for crime and delinquency and attracting extraordinarily large numbers in economically depressed areas. These young people want adult leaders who know children and who understand what it is like to live in neighborhoods where violence is rife.

Crime. Program sites are facing formidable problems from crime. During the 1993–1994 program year, over half the organizations had at least one criminal incident involving a staff member, participant, or property. Vandalism was the most frequent problem reported. However, almost a quarter said some violent crime had been committed.

Within the 1993–1994 program year, 2 percent of the organizations reported that participants brought guns to the program area, almost 4 percent reported that participants brought drugs, and 7 percent reported that participants brought weapons. Ten percent of the organizations reported that they took action—either suspending or expelling a participant—because they committed other crimes. Seven percent of the organizations reported that a participant or staff member had been attacked with a weapon. Thirty-nine percent said that a participant had committed a crime at the program site. Nonparticipating youths, however, were committing the majority of crimes. Only 4 percent said they try to keep out kids who are bringing in problems.

Police involvement. The survey showed that organizations most affected by crime are reaching out to their police departments not just when a crime occurs but to implement preventive approaches. Program directors most frequently asked police departments to provide an officer “just one time” to talk with the children about drugs, crime, and other topics.

Youth-serving organizations that receive services they request from their police are experiencing significantly less crime than those with less responsive police departments. Police have been most responsive in communities that have formed broad coalitions among youth-serving organizations and community volunteers, and that have made it clear that a safe, productive place for children during nonschool hours is a vital community need.

Three case-study sites provide examples of effective partnerships between youth-serving organizations and police departments:

- In Arlington, Texas, a teen center has recruited participants who are members of different youth gangs. Together, participants decided to leave their gang paraphernalia—weapons, colors, and signs—outside. Police assured apprehensive neighbors they would help keep things calm.
- In Bristol, Connecticut, police collaborate with youth organizations to bring schools, probation and parole departments, and families together when a child or teen breaks the law.
- In Spokane, Washington, leaders of youth organizations and the police department went door-to-door, got together people who once were afraid to go outside their homes, and helped them take back their community.

Implications

National youth-serving organizations play a key role in teaching young people skills to become responsible members of their communities. The local affiliates of these organizations are serving many children and teens least likely to learn these skills anywhere else. Although crime is a barrier to serving these young people, police are helping to provide safe and productive places during nonschool hours. Evidence from police departments in the three case-study sites shows that these communities are experiencing lower rates of crime after actively involving adolescents in these organizations, and the children and teens being served feel they are contributing to the community.

This Research Preview is based on a presentation by Marcia Chaiken, Ph.D., Director of Research at LINC, a private research organization based in Alexandria, Virginia.

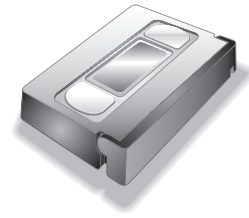
As part of NIJ's Research in Progress Seminar Series, Dr. Chaiken discussed her study with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals and practitioners. A 60-minute VHS videotape, "Youth Afterschool Programs and the Role of Law Enforcement," is available for \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries). Please ask for NCJ 163057.

Use the order form on the next page to obtain this videotape and any of the other tapes now available in the series.

Points of view in this document do not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Latest Criminal Justice Videotape Series from NIJ:

Research in Progress Seminars



Learn about the latest developments in criminal justice research from prominent criminal justice experts.

Each 60-minute tape presents a well-known scholar discussing his or her current studies and how they relate to existing criminal justice research and includes the lecturer's responses to audience questions. In addition to *Youth After-school Programs and the Role of Law Enforcement*, reported on in this Research Preview, the other tapes available in VHS format are:

NCJ 152235—Alfred Blumstein, Ph.D., Professor, Carnegie Mellon University: *Youth Violence, Guns, and Illicit Drug Markets*.

NCJ 152236—Peter W. Greenwood, Ph.D., Director, Criminal Justice Research Program, The RAND Corporation: *Three Strikes, You're Out: Benefits and Costs of California's New Mandatory-Sentencing Law*.

NCJ 152237—Christian Pfeiffer, Ph.D., Director, Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen: *Sentencing Policy and Crime Rates in Reunified Germany*.

NCJ 152238—Arthur L. Kellermann, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Center for Injury Control, and Associate Professor, Emory University: *Understanding and Preventing Violence: A Public Health Perspective*.

NCJ 152692—James Inciardi, Ph.D., Director, Drug and Alcohol Center, University of Delaware: *A Corrections-Based Continuum of Effective Drug Abuse Treatment*.

NCJ 153271—Marvin Wolfgang, Ph.D., Director, Legal Studies and Criminology, University of Pennsylvania: *Crime in a Birth Cohort: A Replication in the People's Republic of China*.

NCJ 153730—Lawrence W. Sherman, Ph.D., Professor, University of Maryland: *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Policing Against Gun Crime*.

NCJ 153272—Cathy Spatz Widom, Ph.D., Professor, State University of New York—Albany: *The Cycle of Violence Revisited Six Years Later*.

NCJ 153273—Wesley Skogan, Ph.D., Professor, Northwestern University: *Community Policing in Chicago: Fact or Fiction?*

NCJ 153850—Scott H. Decker, Ph.D., Professor, University of Missouri—St. Louis, and Susan Pennell, San Diego Association of Governments: *Monitoring the Illegal Firearms Market*.

NCJ 154277—Terrie Moffitt, Ph.D., Professor, University of Wisconsin: *Partner Violence Among Young Adults*.

NCJ 156923—Orlando Rodriguez, Ph.D., Director, Hispanic Research Center, Fordham University: *The New Immigrant Hispanic Populations: Implications for Crime and Delinquency in the Next Decade*.

NCJ 156924—Robert Sampson, Ph.D., Professor, University of Chicago: *Communities and Crime: A Study in Chicago*.

NCJ 156925—John Monahan, Ph.D., Professor, University of Virginia: *Mental Illness and Violent Crime*.

NCJ 157643—Benjamin E. Saunders, Ph.D., and Dean G. Kilpatrick, Ph.D., Medical University of South Carolina: *Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization: Preliminary Results from the National Survey of Adolescents*.

NCJ 159739—Joel H. Garner, Ph.D., Research Director, Joint Centers for Justice Studies: *Use of Force By and Against the Police*.

NCJ 159740—Kim English, Research Director, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice: *Managing Adult Sex Offenders in Community Settings: A Containment Approach*.

NCJ 160765—Michael Tonry, Ph.D., Professor, University of Minnesota: *Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration*.

NCJ 161259—Robert Crutchfield, Ph.D., Professor, University of Washington: *Labor Markets, Employment, and Crime*.

(continued on back)



To order any of these tapes, please complete and return this form with your payment (\$19, U.S.; \$24, Canada and other countries) to National Criminal Justice Reference Service, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Call 800-851-3420, or e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.org if you have any questions.

Please send me the following tapes:

Qty.	Presenter Name and NCJ Number	Subtotal
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Daytime phone () _____

___ Payment enclosed (U.S. dollars) ___ Deduct this item from my NCJRS Deposit Account, account no. _____

Charge my: ___ MasterCard ___ VISA Account no. _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

NCJ 161836—Geoffrey Alpert, Ph.D., Professor, University of South Carolina: *Police in Pursuit: Policy and Practice*.

NCJ 163056—Daniel Brookoff, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Director, Medical Education, Memphis Methodist Hospital: *Drug Use and Domestic Violence*.

NCJ 163058—Eric Wish, Ph.D., Director, Center for Substance Abuse Research, University of Maryland: *Dependence and Drug Treatment Needs Among Adult Arrestees*.

NCJ 163059—Jeffrey Fagan, Ph.D., Professor, Columbia University: *Adolescent Violence: A View From the Street*.

NCJ 163921—Patricia Tjaden, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Center for Policy Research: *The Crime of Stalking: How Big Is the Problem?*

NCJ 164262—Andrew Golub, Ph.D., Principal Research Associate, National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.: *Crack's Decline: Some Surprises Across U.S. Cities*.

NCJ 164725—Ronald Huff, Ph.D., Professor, Ohio State University: *Criminal Behavior of Gang Members*.

NCJ 164726—James Austin, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, National Council on Crime and Delinquency: *Sentencing Guidelines: A State Perspective*.

NCJ 165585—Garen Wintemute, M.D., Director, Violence Prevention Research Program, University of California–Davis: *Predicting Criminal Behavior Among Authorized Purchasers of Handguns*.

Quick Access to NIJ Publication News

For news about NIJ's most recent publications, including solicitations for grant applications, subscribe to JUSTINFO, the bimonthly newsletter sent to you via e-mail. Here's how:

- Send an e-mail to listproc@ncjrs.org
- Leave the subject line blank
- Type subscribe justinfo your name (e.g., subscribe justinfo Jane Doe) in the body of the message

Or check out the "What's New" section at the Justice Information Center homepage:
<http://www.ncjrs.org>

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/NIJ
Permit No. G-91