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**IMPACT OF THE CHILDREN AT RISK PROGRAM**  
Preliminary Findings of the First Year

Prepared for the National Institute of Justice  
and  
The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

February 14, 1995

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U.S. Department of Justice  
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## *Summary of Findings*

Preliminary findings on the Children at Risk Program (CAR) are based on official records on the 228 youth recruited for the evaluation between January and May 1993 in Austin, Bridgeport, Memphis and Seattle. Analysis of officially recorded police and juvenile court contacts shows that CAR participants had fewer contacts with the criminal justice system than non-participants during the first year of the program.

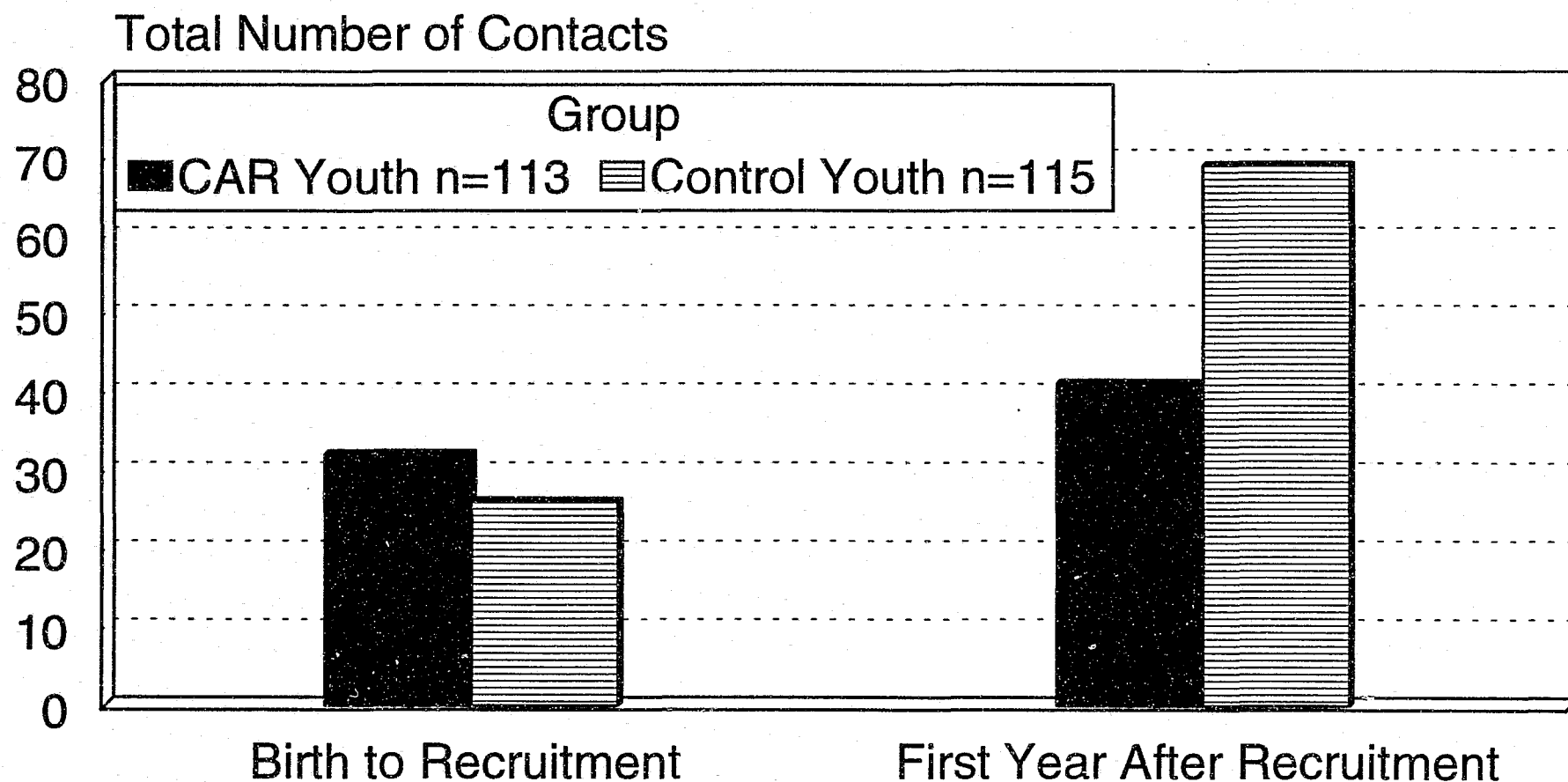
- CAR youth had 41 contacts with the police in the first 12 months after joining the program, compared to 69 police contacts during this period for youth in the randomly assigned control group. This difference is statistically significant ( $p=.049$ ).
- CAR youth had 34 contacts with juvenile court in the first 12 months after joining the program, compared to 71 court contacts during this period for youth in the control group. This difference is statistically significant ( $p=.009$ ).

There are two plausible explanations for these differences. First, CAR participation may decrease involvement in delinquent behavior. Preventing delinquency is one of the program's primary goals. Second, CAR may be changing the way incidents are handled by the police and courts. Courts and police may have elected to handle minor offenses committed by CAR youth informally, or case managers may have responded by acting as an advocate when a CAR youth was arrested or charged. The results of the follow-up interviews at the end of program participation will provide additional information on the extent to which CAR is reducing delinquency and/or shifting system response to these high risk youth. In either case, CAR appears to be diverting youth at a troublesome developmental stage from early involvement with the justice system.

Analysis of school performance, based on records of grades, attendance, promotion and standardized test scores for these same youth for the 1992-93 and the 1993-94 school years, indicates that:

- At the end of the 1992-93 school year, which includes the first semester of program participation, 88% of the CAR youth were promoted to the next grade, compared to 72% of the youth in the control group. This difference is statistically significant ( $p=.001$ ).
- At the end of the 1993-94 school year, 82% of the CAR youth were promoted to the next grade, compared to 70% of the youth in the control group. This difference is statistically significant ( $p=.02$ ).

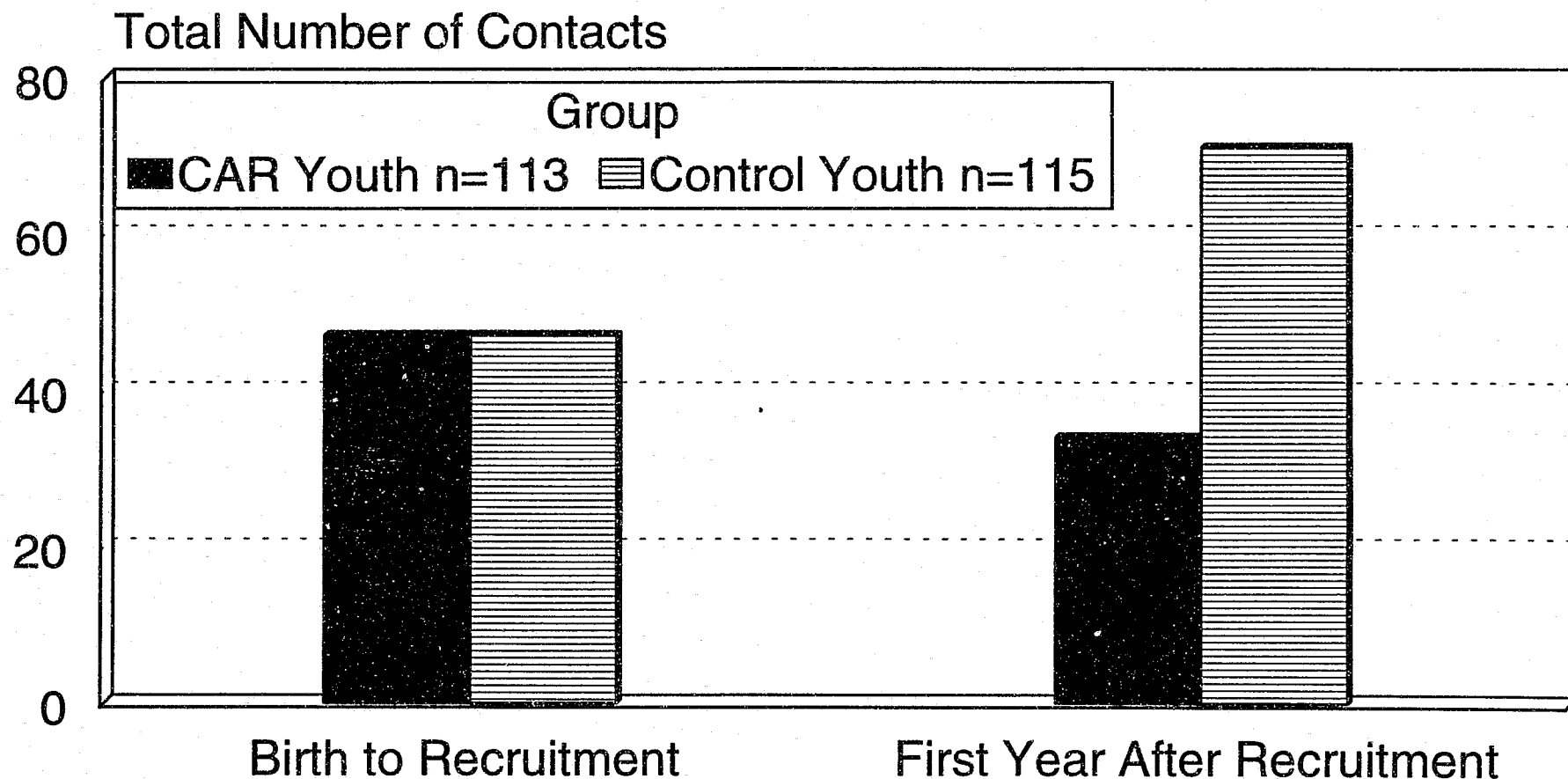
## Preliminary Findings on Police Contacts: Participants in The Children at Risk Program vs. Control Youth



Notes: Contacts include those related to youth delinquency including status offenses. Contacts related to abuse, neglect, and family matters are excluded;  
Sampling sites: Austin, TX, Bridgeport, CT, Memphis, TN and Seattle, WA.

Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

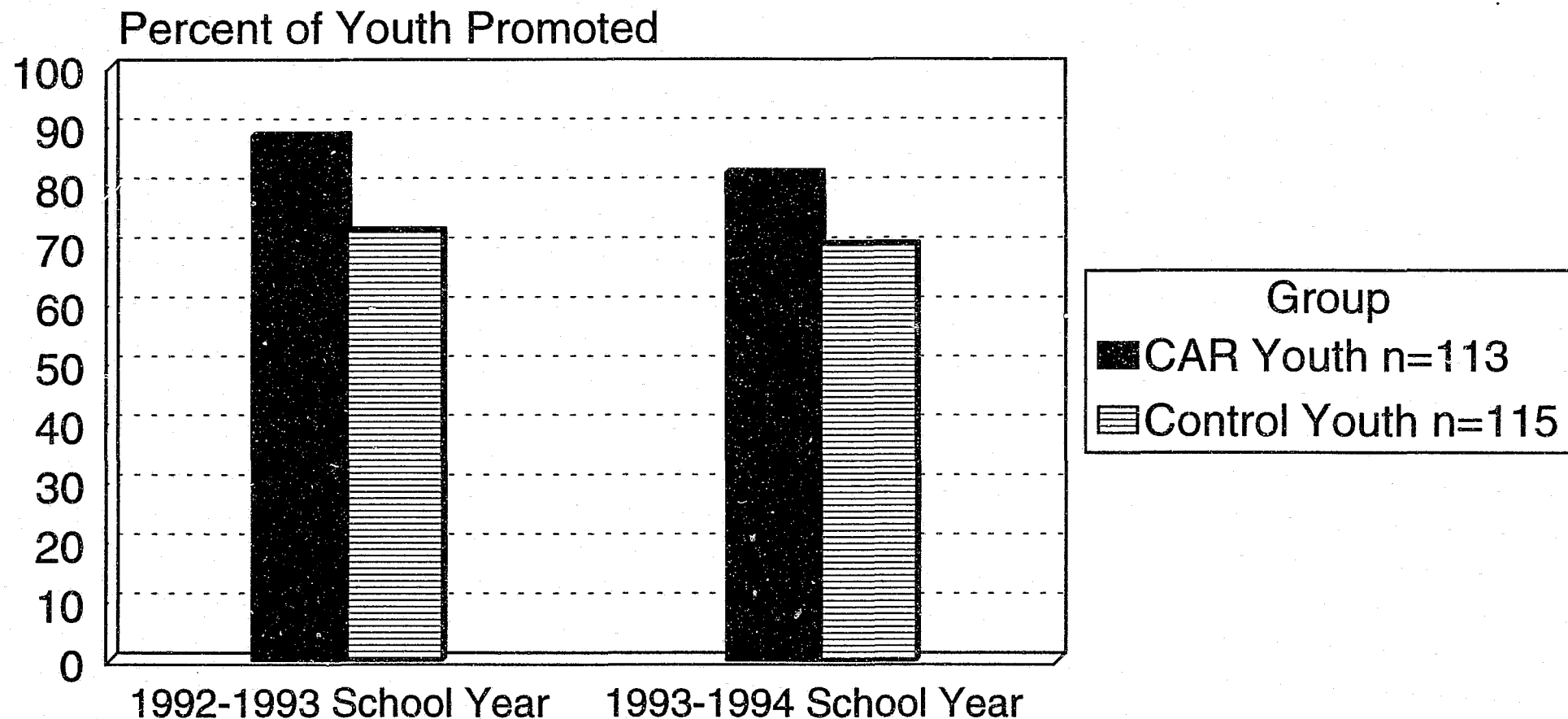
## Preliminary Findings on Court Contacts: Participants in The Children at Risk Program vs. Control Youth



Notes: Contacts include those related to youth delinquency including status offenses. Contacts related to abuse, neglect, and family matters are excluded; Sampling sites: Austin, TX, Bridgeport, CT, Memphis, TN and Seattle, WA.

Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

## Preliminary Findings on School Promotion: Participants in The Children at Risk Program vs. Control Youth



Note: Sampling sites: Austin, TX, Bridgeport, CT, Memphis, TN and Seattle, WA.

Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

Although CAR youth had slightly better overall attendance rates than the control group in both years, the differences were not significant. During the second year of the study, the 1993-94 school year, 11% of the CAR youth were chronically absent (failed to attend 30% or more of the time), compared to 17% of the control group youth ( $p=.08$ ), suggesting that youth who attend CAR may prove to be less likely to have very high rates of absenteeism.

CAR youth did not have significantly higher grades or standardized achievement test scores than control youth in either year, nor were changes between the first and second year significantly different for the two groups. The tutoring components of CAR began slowly in several sites and were not always well attended, which may explain why the grades and test scores of the two groups appear so similar. The lack of apparent gains in the academic performance of CAR youth, combined with the reductions in delinquency, suggest that the significant differences in promotion rates may have resulted from improvements in behavior and reductions in chronic absenteeism on the part of some CAR participants, rather than improvement in academic skills.

These findings on the first year sample must be considered preliminary. The sample of 228 is relatively small and the follow-up period does not cover the entire two year period during which services are offered. The full evaluation will be based on a two-year follow-up of 874 youth.

## *The CAR Intervention*

CAR is an intensive two-year intervention for high risk youth in high risk neighborhoods. Coordinated planning and services integration are central to the program. Local programs are encouraged to build on existing resources, identify the needs of their area, and develop culturally appropriate activities. Each program is required to include eight components considered key to comprehensive prevention:

**Case Management.** Case managers are expected to prepare comprehensive service plans for the youth and others in the household and work closely with the youth and family as an advocate.

**Family Services.** Family services may include intensive family counseling (both individual and group), parenting skills training, stress management/coping skills training, identification and treatment of substance abuse and health care provision. Efforts are made to connect family members with education, training, employment, income support, and social services if needed.

**Education Services.** Tutoring or homework assistance is offered to all CAR participants. Referrals for educational testing, remedial classes or other specialized courses aimed at reducing academic failure may be made if needed.

**After-School and Summer Activities.** Recreational programs, life-skill/leadership development activities, and training or education are provided to offer positive experiences outside of traditional school hours.

**Mentoring.** Each program has arrangements with local organizations to provide mentors for youth in need of a caring relationship with an adult.

**Incentives.** Gifts and special events are used as incentives to build morale and attachment to the pro-social goals of the program. Stipends for community service during summer programs are provided to some youth.

**Community Policing/Enhanced Enforcement.** All CAR programs include direct participation of police officers. Additional community law enforcement activities include stationing police in schools and neighborhood locations to insure order and maintain and enhance relationships with community groups. Stepped up supervision and sanctioning of drug offenders is intended to reduce their influence in the target neighborhoods.

**Criminal/Juvenile Justice Intervention.** Case managers work with juvenile court personnel to provide community service opportunities and enhanced supervision of youth in the justice system.

There is considerable variation in the types and level of services delivered in local CAR programs. The actual use of each required service component is recorded in the CAR Management Information System. The description of CAR services in Appendix A gives examples of strategies used during the first year of implementation, based on a continuing documentation study (Hirota 1994).

CAR programs operate within clearly defined geographic areas and select youth based on clearly defined eligibility requirements. Youth are 11 to 13 when they begin the program; attend the sixth or seventh grade of the neighborhood middle school; and live in the target neighborhood. They qualify for admission to CAR by meeting any one of the following three criteria:

**School Risk**, defined by any three school problems, one of which must reflect a school behavior problem. Problem indicators include: special education, grade retention, poor academic performance, truancy, tardiness, out-of-school suspension, or disruptive behavior in school;

**Family Risk**, defined by a known history of family violence, child neglect or abuse, criminal conviction of a family member in the past five years, gang membership, known or suspected drug use or sales; or

**Personal Risk**, defined by a history of known or suspected drug use or sales, past arrest or involvement in delinquency, mental illness, gang membership, victim of abuse or neglect, and pregnancy or parenthood.

CAR is designed to intervene in the process of developing deviant behaviors. The goals reflect the integration of two dominant strands of criminological explanations of deviance — social control theory and strain theory — with social learning theory explanations of the acquisition and maintenance of anti-social behavior as proposed by Elliot, Huizinga, and Ageton (1985). To reduce strain and enhance social control, CAR programs focus on:

- Strengthening pro-social bonding to role models, peers, and institutions as well as helping schools, families, and neighborhoods become more organized and consistent in control of deviant behavior. Creating attachment to conventional norms and values and commitment to conventional individuals, groups, and institutions is expected to reduce the likelihood of deviant behavior.
- Building educational and social skills for future success. According to strain theory, deviant behavior is attributed to a discrepancy between aspirations for success and opportunities to achieve it through law-abiding behaviors (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Merton 1957). Skill building increases alternatives to illegal activities and reduces frustration at blocked opportunities.



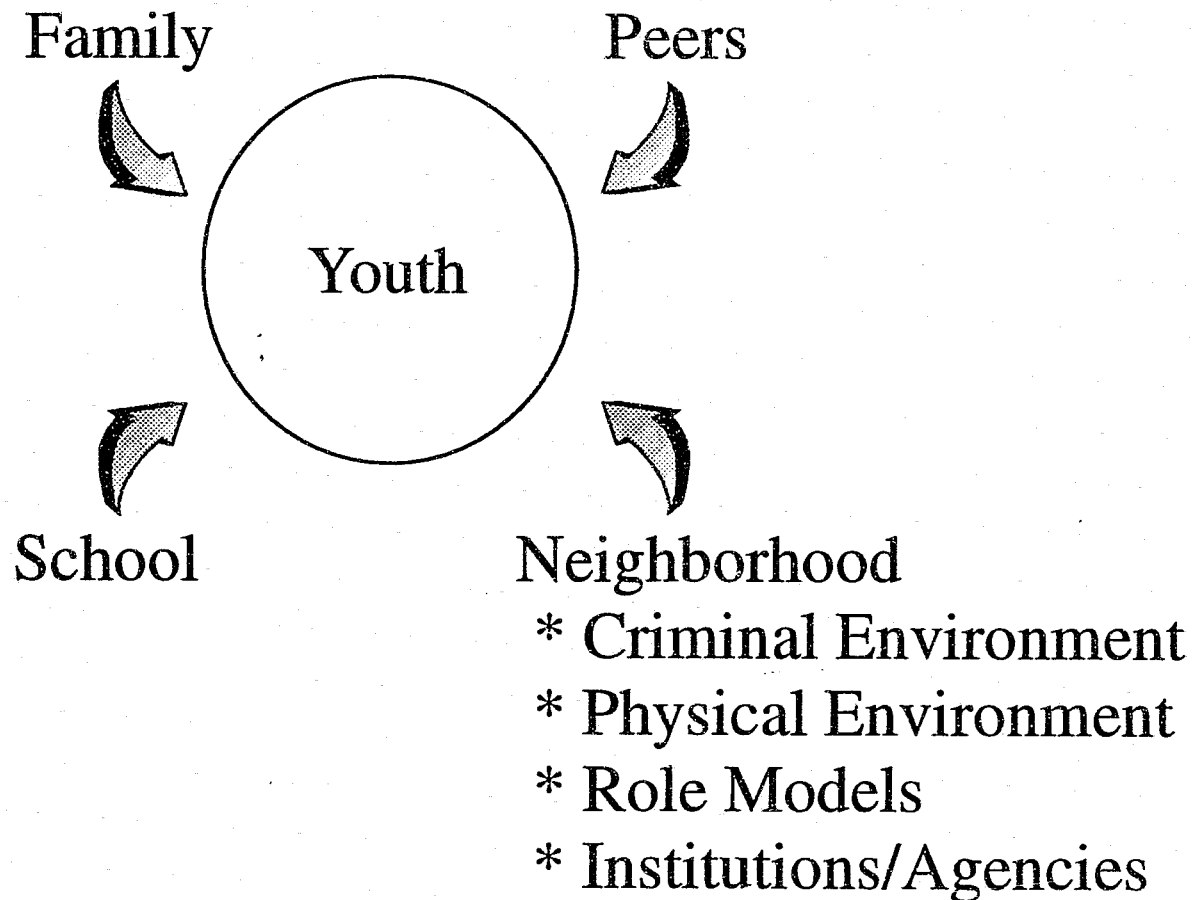
Because behaviors, conventional and deviant, are socially learned, CAR activities target the major influences in this process -- the family, the peer group, and the neighborhood environment. A primary focus is helping families function more effectively as caregivers for the youth. Factors such as unstructured home environments, parental neglect, family drug involvement, and inconsistent discipline have been identified as predictors of drug use, while time spent with youth, shared decision-making, and good communication are family strengths found to contribute to child development. CAR advocates work with caregivers on parenting skills, make referrals to needed services after assessment of all family members, and provide opportunities for parents to take part in recreational activities with the youth.

The CAR after-school and summer programs are designed to create positive peer group activities that will include exposure to positive role models, skill-building activities and divert peer group time and energy from delinquency. Working with youth in groups is expected to reduce the negative peer groups in the neighborhood and increase the effectiveness of services to individual youth.

CAR strategies for making the neighborhood environment more supportive of youth development focuses on services integration across agencies. Key in this process is collaboration with police and courts to reduce the presence and influence of gangs, drug dealers, criminal activity, and easy access to weapons. Police officers work with youth personally in the schools and with the CAR case managers. In addition, enhanced enforcement through patrol of routes to school and problem-oriented community policing are focused on CAR neighborhoods to control drugs and crime in the area.

## Influences on Youth Socialization Targeted by The Children at Risk Program

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## *The CAR Study.*

These preliminary findings are based on experimental comparisons of the first year sample of youth in four cities: Austin, Bridgeport, Memphis and Seattle. The sample consists of 113 CAR participants and 115 youth in a randomly assigned control group.

The youth sample is 51% female and includes youth of African-American (43%), Hispanic (33%), white (15%), and other (9%) heritages. Risks identified as a basis for recruitment for the study included: academic performance (60% of the youth), school behavior problems (43%), family risk (33%), and personal risk indicators (55%). Most youth (94%) were ages 12 or 13 at the time of the baseline interviews, conducted between January and May 1993. Interviews were conducted in-person in English (80%), in Spanish (13%), and with the assistance of a translator (7%).

Primary caregivers of these youth are included in the evaluation and were interviewed at the start of the program, after providing written consent for the research. The caregivers, defined at the time of interview as the person who registered the youth in school or would take care of the youth in a medical emergency, included mothers/stepmothers (79%), fathers/stepfathers (11%), grandparents (5%), and other adults (5%),

Findings from in-person interviews following sample recruitment confirm the need for intensive intervention. Indicators of risk for delinquency and substance abuse reported by youth include:

- Experimentation with drugs. Gateway drugs had been tried by nearly half the youth (48%): 21% reported some cigarette use; 33% had used alcohol; and 10% had used marijuana at least once in their lifetime. In the month before the baseline interview, 17% had used one or more of these gateway drugs: 5% had used cigarettes; 10% had used alcohol; and 3% had used marijuana. Lifetime use of stronger drug use (cocaine, PCP, non-medical use of prescription drugs, inhalants, crack, other cocaine, hallucinogens, or heroin) was reported by 14%; 4% used one of these stronger drugs in the month before interview.
- Problem behaviors. The most prevalent delinquent behaviors included: serious fights in school (45%), group fights (31%), vandalism (21%), and carrying a weapon (26%). Thirteen percent had participated in drug sales -- 8% by acting as a lookout; 6% by selling drugs to friends; and 5% by preparing drugs for sales. Nineteen percent had been sexually active.
- Problems in school. Although most youth (61%) indicated that they liked school most of the time, 71% had been sent to the principal's office during the current school year for discipline; 17% were sent more than five times. Fewer than half (48%) were sure they would be promoted to the next grade.

### *CAR Impact on Contacts with the Criminal Justice System*

The measures used to assess the impact of CAR on officially recorded criminal activity include:

- Number of contacts with the police;
- Percentage of youth with any contact with the police;
- Number of contacts with the courts; and
- Percentage of youth with any contact with the courts.

The reports were separated by dates of recruitment and contact into two categories: (1) events which occurred prior to program recruitment, and (2) events which occurred after recruitment. Only incidents involving delinquent behavior are included; court cases involving child abuse, neglect, or dependency were excluded. Because it was not possible to link police contacts to court contacts, the analysis examines the pattern of contacts separately for each type of agency.

Contacts with the police before and during the year following recruitment are described in Table 1. Prior to recruitment, the youth in the treatment and control groups showed no significant differences in the likelihood of police contact or the number of police contacts. Before starting CAR, 21 members of the treatment group had a total of 32 police contacts, compared to 18 members of the control who had a total of 26 police contacts. The description of the contacts shows that most of the incidents involved arrest, but few involved a violent offense charge and none involved a drug charge.

During the next year, 25 youth in the treatment group had at least one police contact, compared to 30 control youth. This difference, tested using a general linear model that controlled for prior police contact, was not significant ( $p=.19$ ). However, the 41 police contacts reported for these CAR youth was significantly fewer than the 69 contacts by youth in the control group ( $p=.049$ ). Again, most police contacts in both groups included an arrest, but few involved a charge for a violent offense or a drug offense.

Contacts with juvenile court before and during the year following recruitment are described in Table 2. Before the start of CAR, 28 treatment group youth had 47 officially recorded contacts with the juvenile court, compared to the 47 contacts reported by 29 youth in the control group. One year later, statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups were found in the likelihood of a court contact and number of court contacts using general linear models to detect change. Twenty-two CAR youth had contact with the juvenile court during this year, compared to 34 control group youth ( $p=.036$ ). CAR youth had 34 officially recorded contacts compared to 71 by control group youth ( $p=.009$ ).

Table 1. Contacts with the Police Before and One Year After Recruitment: First Year Sample

	Treatment Sample (n=113)	Control Sample (n=115)
<b>A. Police Contacts Before Recruitment</b>		
Number of Youth with Any Contact	21	18
Total Number of Contacts	32	26
Type of Contact	12	8
Informal	19	17
Arrest	1	1
Not Specified		
Contact Charge		
Status Offense	5	5
Property Offense	4	4
Violence Offense	7	8
Drug offense	0	0
Other Offense	15	8
Missing	1	
Detained at contact	10	10
<b>B. Police Contacts After Recruitment</b>		
Number of Youth with Any Contact	25	30
Total Number of Contacts	41	69
Type of Contact		
Informal	7	14
Arrest	29	43
Not Specified	5	12
Contact Charge		
Status Offense	5	13
Property Offense	7	11
Violence Offense	8	13
Drug offense	2	1
Other Offense	13	26
Missing	6	5
Detained at Contact	15	21

Table 2. Contacts with Juvenile Court Before and One Year After Program Recruitment: First Year Sample

	Treatment Sample (n=113)	Control Sample (n=115)
<b>A. Court Contacts Before Recruitment</b>		
Number of Youth with Any Contact	28	29
Total Number of Contact	47	47
Type of Contact	11	9
Informal	21	15
Formal	15	23
Not Specified		
Contact Charges	5	8
Status Charge	14	20
Property Charge	8	6
Violent Charge	1	1
Drug Charge	17	8
Other Charge	2	4
Charge Missing		
Case Disposition		
Dismissals	14	11
Informal Probation	23	19
Formal Probation	5	3
Incarceration	0	1
Pending	0	5
Missing	7	6
<b>B. Court Contacts After Recruitment</b>		
Number of Youth with Any Contact	22	34
Total Number of Contacts	34	71
Type of Contact	6	12
Informal	20	26
Formal	8	33
Not Specified		
Contact Charges		
Status Charge	6	13
Property Charge	5	20
Violent Charge	8	16
Drug Charge	1	1
Other Charge	12	19
Charge Missing	2	2
Case Disposition		
Dismissals	4	6
Informal Probation	15	29
Formal Probation	4	10
Incarceration	0	3
Pending	1	3
Missing	10	20

## *CAR Impact on School Outcomes*

Data are available for the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years for the youth in the first year sample. CAR services for these youth began between January and May of 1993, with 86% entering the program before the end of March. Thus, outcomes for the first school year reflect program participation of several months for most of the treatment group. CAR services were offered to CAR youth throughout the 1993-94 school year.

Indicators of school outcomes include<sup>1</sup>:

- Promotion to the next grade (yes/no).
- Attendance. Attendance is defined as the percentage of scheduled days or classes attended each school year. Youth who failed to attend 30% or more of their scheduled days or classes are classified as chronically absent compared to youth who attended more regularly.
- Grade point average. Grades from multiple schools and cities were converted to a numeric scale as follows: A=4.0, A-=3.67, B+=3.33, B=3.0, B-=2.67, C+=2.33, C=2.0, C-=1.67, D+=1.33, D=1.0, D-=.67, F=0. Austin uses a 100-point performance scale which was converted to the four-point scale.
- Achievement. Standardized achievement tests were administered in the Spring in 1993 and 1994. Austin used the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program for Texas (NAPT); Bridgeport used the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) or the Spanish Assessment of Basic Skills (SABE); Memphis used the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS); and Seattle used the California Achievement Test (CAT). Each test battery provides a separate score for reading, math, and language. Normal curve equivalent scores (NCE) are used to compare results across tests and test years. However, no scores were available for 18% of the sample in the 1992-93 school year, and 33% in the 1993-94 school year, due largely to absences on the test day.

Compared to youth in the control group, CAR youth were hypothesized to: 1) be more likely to be promoted to the next grade; 2) have higher average grades; 3) attend a greater percentage of scheduled school days or classes; and 4) show higher achievement scores on standardized tests by the spring of 1994. Significance tests for the 1993-94 outcomes are based on models that control for values on the indicator in 1992-93. The results are shown in Table 3 by school year.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that data on some indicators was missing for some youth. The figures shown in parentheses in Table 3 indicate the number of cases for which data were available on each indicator. Missing data was slightly higher for the 1993-94 school year.

Promotion. At the end of the 1992-93 school year, which includes the first semester of program participation, 88% of the CAR youth were promoted to the next grade, compared to 72% of the youth in the control group. This difference was significant ( $p=.001$ ). In the 1993-94 school year, 82% of the CAR youth were promoted to the next grade, compared to 70% of the youth in the control group. This difference is significant ( $p=.02$ ). In both years, promotion rates were higher for CAR youth than control youth in all cities reporting, supporting the consistency of this finding.

Attendance. In the 1992-93 school year, CAR youth attended 89% of their scheduled days or classes, while the control youth attended 88%. During the next year, attendance declined for both groups to 85% for the CAR youth and 83% for the control youth. The attendance rate among CAR youth exceeded the rate for control youth in every city both years, although differences were small and not statistically significant. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 30% or more of the scheduled school time, was similar for the two groups in the 1992-93 school year (4.5% for CAR youth compared to 5.3% for the control youth,  $p=.38$ ). In 1993-94, the percentage of CAR youth who were chronically absent grew to 11% compared to 17% of the control youth. While the difference between the treatment and control group in chronic absenteeism is encouraging, the difference does not attain statistical significance ( $p=.08$ ).

Grades. There were no significant differences between CAR youth and the control youth in grade-point averages in either school year. On a four point scale, the average grade for the youth in both samples was approximately a C- in both years.

Achievement. Standardized tests of achievement indicated close similarity between CAR youth and the control youth both years. Results showed no evidence to suggest that CAR youth were improving on their standardized measures of achievement, nor that CAR youth scored higher than control youth.

These preliminary findings of the impact of CAR on school performance should be interpreted in light of several factors. First, the primary focus of CAR is on preventing drug use and delinquency, with major efforts made to reduce anti-social peer group and neighborhood influences and supporting positive family functioning. The emphasis on improving school skills and performance is part of an overall strategy aimed at enhancing attachment to pro-social norms and improving opportunities for success in legitimate activities. The tutoring components of CAR began slowly in several sites and were not always well attended, which may explain why the two groups appear so similar on grades and test scores.

Overall, the pattern of findings -- reductions in delinquency and possible reductions in chronic absenteeism -- suggest that the significant differences in promotion rates between CAR and control youth may be associated with improvements in behavior, rather than academic skills. It should be noted that missing data on the school performance measures



Table 3. School Performance During First and Second year of Program Participation

	Treatment Sample (n=113)	Control Sample (n=115)	Probability Value
<b>A. 1992-1993 School Year</b>			
Promoted to Next Grade	88% (n=112)	72% (n=112)	.001
Grade Point Average	1.60 (n=109)	1.53 (n=103)	.21
Attendance Rate	89% (n=111)	88% (n=112)	.23
Chronically Absent Youth	4.5% (n=111)	5.3% (n=112)	.38
Achievement Test Scores (NCE)			
Reading	36 (n=96)	37 (n=92)	.40
Math	39 (n=96)	40 (n=89)	.40
Language	40 (n=94)	40 (n=93)	.53
<b>B. 1993-1994 School Year</b>			
Promoted to Next Grade	82% (n=108)	70% (n=108)	.02
Grade Point Average	1.74 (n=96)	1.77 (n=96)	.40
Attendance Rate	85% (n=100)	83% (n=102)	.18
Chronically Absent Youth	11% (n=100)	17% (n=102)	.08
Achievement Test Scores (NCE)			
Reading	34 (n=80)	32 (n=75)	.30
Math	38 (n=72)	41 (n=69)	.16
Language	37 (n=72)	40 (n=68)	.23

increased in the second school year; subsequent analyses will examine the potential of missing data to affect the reported findings.

### *Crime Rates by Neighborhood*

Analysis of the effects of CAR on neighborhood crime is based on four cities -- three of the cities in the first year sample described above (Austin, Bridgeport, and Memphis) and Savannah, which began offering CAR services in the fall of 1993. Crime statistics have been collected for CAR neighborhoods, defined using the boundaries within which participating youth were required to reside, and for comparison areas which resembled CAR neighborhoods in level of economic distress, crime and drug activity<sup>2</sup>.

Police incident reports were collected for three years: 1991 (the year prior to CAR); 1992 (CAR began in the Fall of 1992 in all cities except Savannah); and 1993 (when CAR operated for the full year except in Savannah). The reports have been grouped into two categories: Part I crimes (serious offenses such as aggravated assault, robbery, homicide) and Part II crimes (less serious offenses such as vandalism, theft).

City-wide rates of serious crimes (Part I) declined in all four cities during these years. In three cities -- Austin, Bridgeport, and Savannah, the percentage drop in serious crime was larger in the CAR neighborhood compared to both the city as a whole and the comparison neighborhoods. Serious crime reports dropped 16% to 27% in CAR neighborhoods in these cities. In Memphis, the increase in serious crime rate of 5% was less than the 10% increase in the comparison area, but did not reflect the slight citywide decline in serious crime.

City-wide rates of less serious crime (Part II) increased in three of the cities -- Austin, Bridgeport, and Savannah -- with relatively large increases reported in Austin and Savannah. However, in these cities Part II incidents declined by more than 5% in the CAR neighborhoods. In the comparison areas within these cities, Part II offenses either increased (Austin and Savannah) or showed a much smaller drop (Bridgeport). Memphis reported a drop of about 5% in Part II crimes in the city as a whole and in the comparison area, but a 5% increase in the CAR neighborhood.

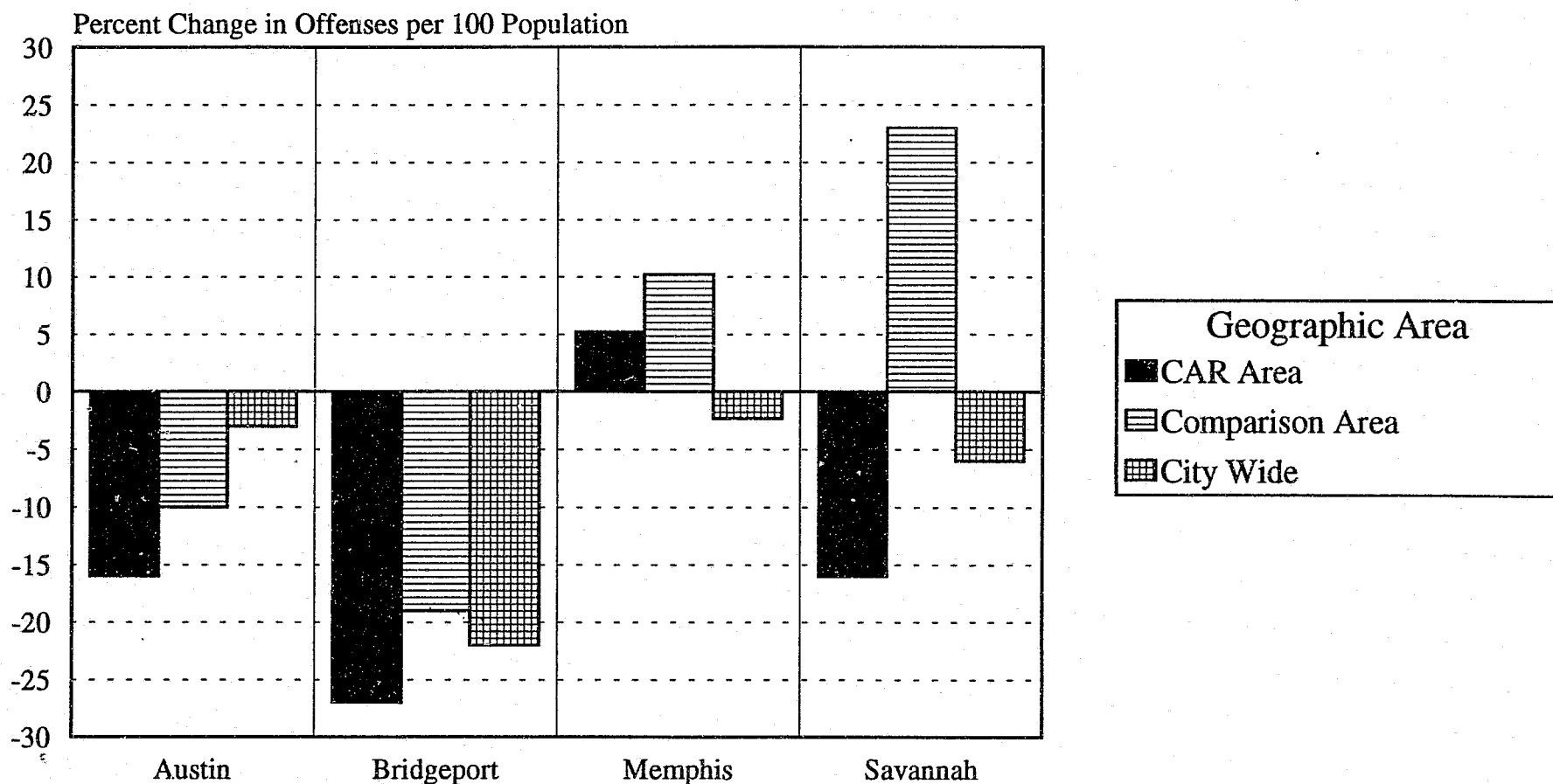
Statistics on juvenile arrests by area of the city, available only in Austin and Savannah, also indicate fewer juvenile arrests in the target areas of these cities relative to the comparison high risk neighborhoods.

Because several CAR neighborhoods had other crime prevention programs at work, some of which were neighborhood specific and some of which were city-wide, changes in crime rates may reflect the effects of CAR or CAR working in combination with other programs. For example, Bridgeport's Project Phoenix erected barriers to reduce drive-through drug

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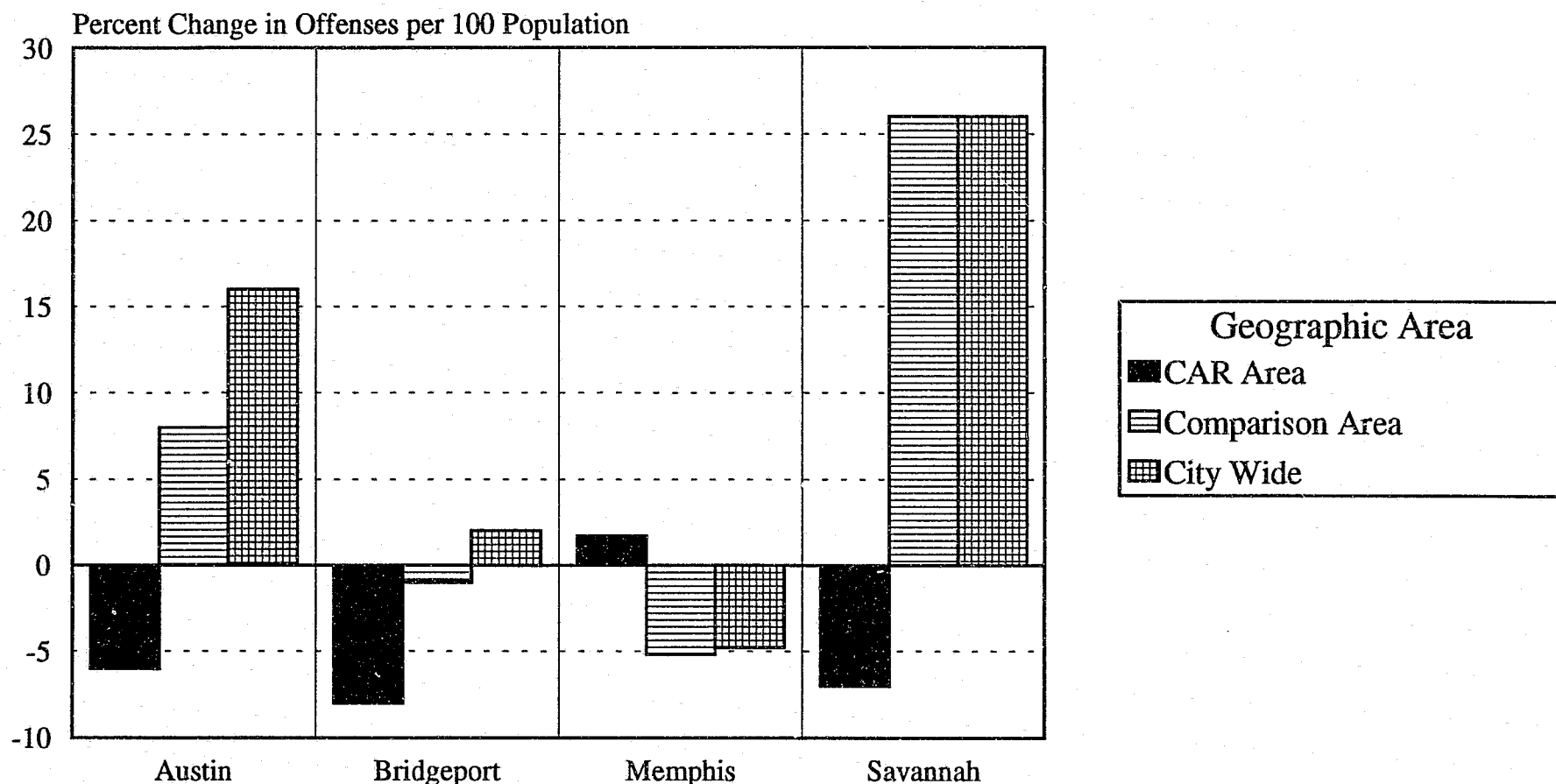
<sup>2</sup> Samples of youth in these areas were selected in the 1993-94 school year for inclusion in the evaluation as a quasi-experimental comparison group.

# Percent Change in Police Reports of Serious Offenses (Part I) 1991-1993



Serious Offenses Include: Murder, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft and Arson.  
Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

## Percent Change in Police Reports of Less Serious Offenses (Part II) 1991-1993

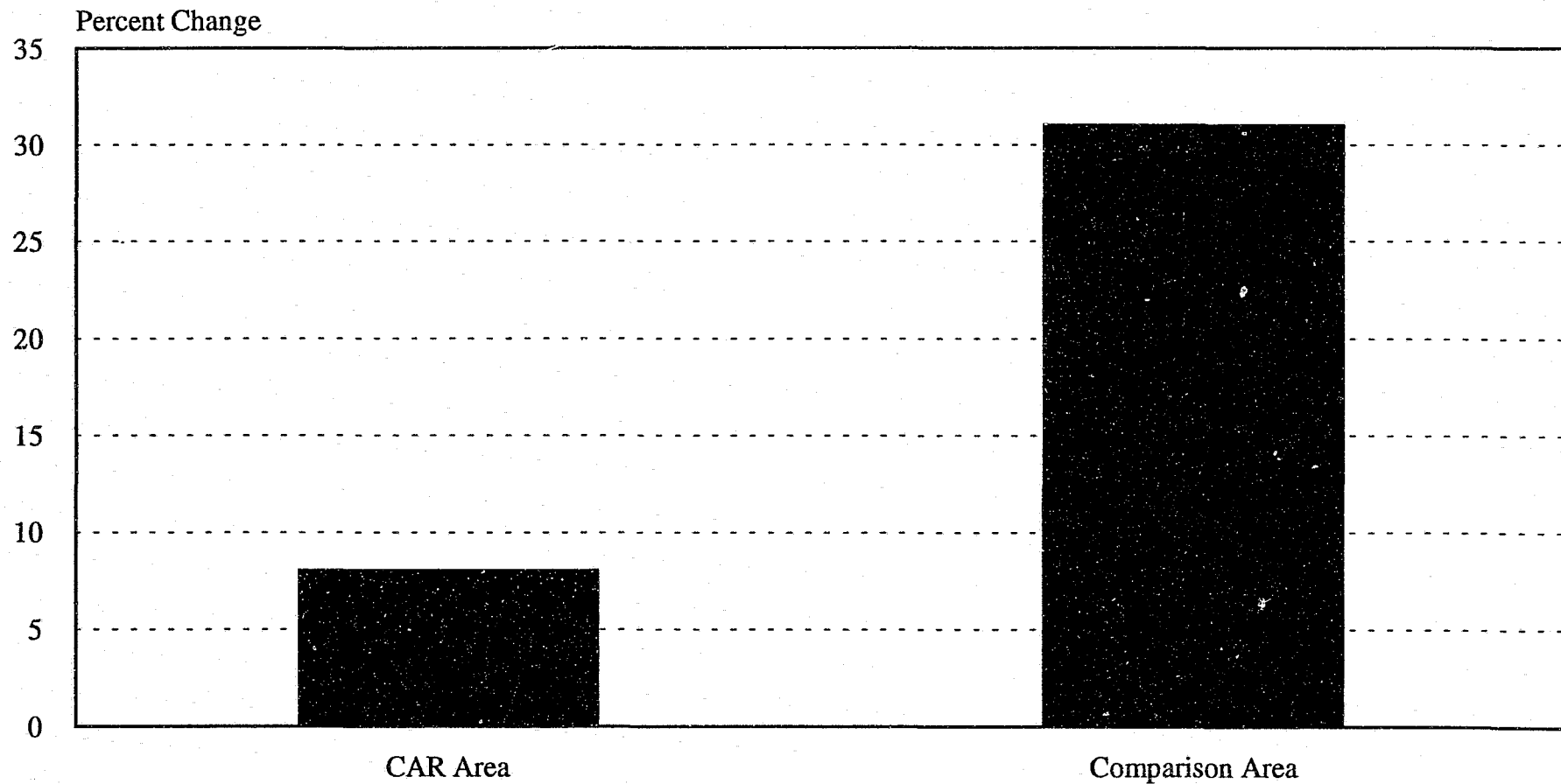


Less Serious Offenses Include: Simple Assaults, Forgery, Fraud, Embezzlement, Possessing Stolen Property, Vandalism, Weapon Possession, Prostitution, Sex Offenses, Drug Abuse Violations, Gambling, Offenses Against Family and Children, DUI, Liquor Laws, Drunkenness, Disorderly Conduct, Vagrancy, Suspicion, Curfew Laws, Runaway, and other state and local laws excluding traffic.

Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

## Percent Change in Juvenile Arrests in Austin 1992-1993

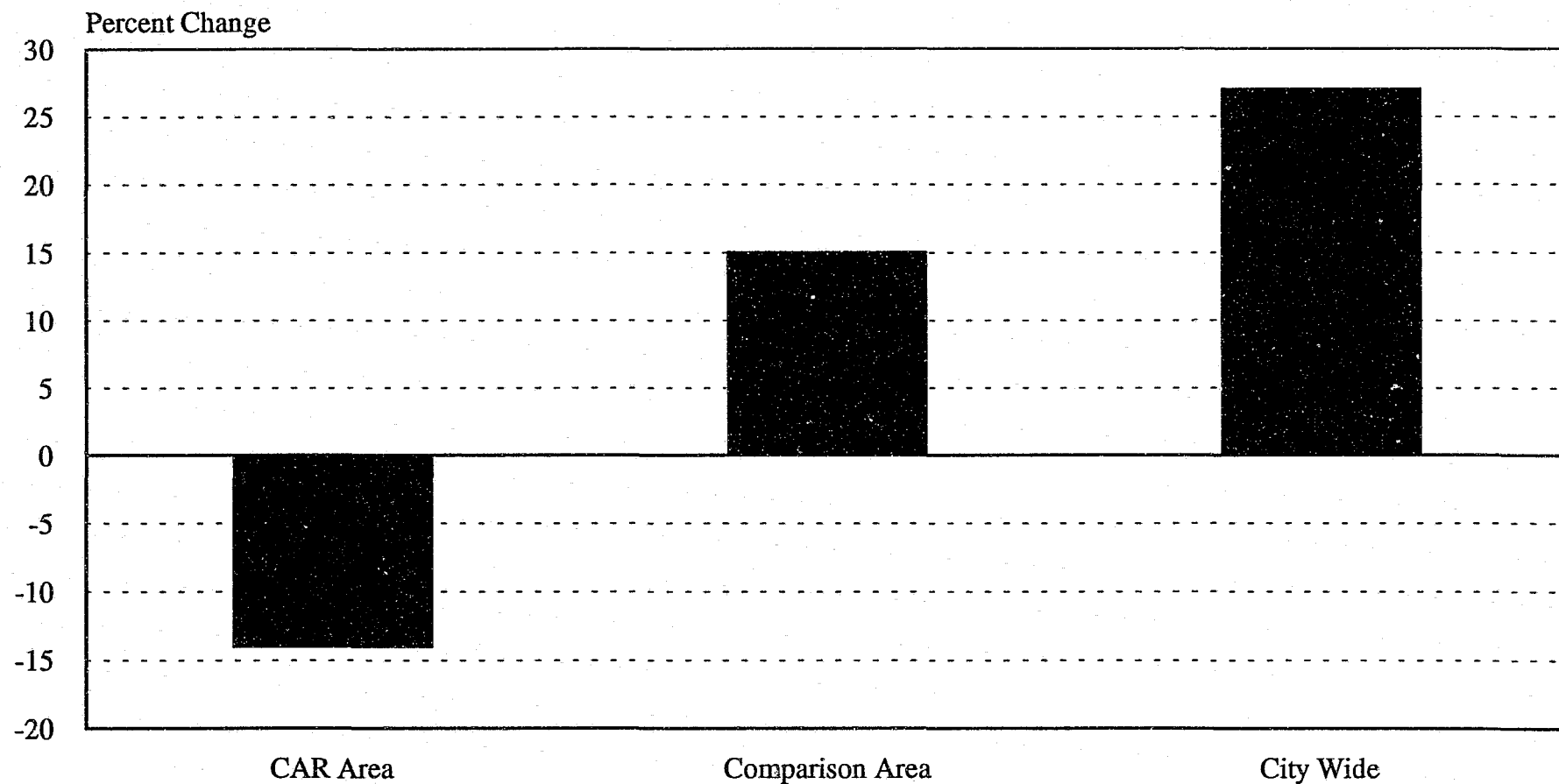
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Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

## Percent Change in Juvenile Arrests in Savannah 1991-1993

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Source: "Impact of the Children at Risk Program: Preliminary Findings on the First Year," The Urban Institute, February 1995.

traffic in the target neighborhood. Additional data is being collected on policing activities by neighborhood and across the city to provide more information on the factors which have contributed to the apparent crime reductions in these high risk areas.

### ***Future Evaluation Plans***

As part of the impact evaluation, the Urban Institute plans to continue collecting official statistics on the youth and neighborhoods annually. Follow-up interviews with youth and their primary caregivers, which are scheduled to take place two years after recruitment, began in January 1995 and will be completed in early 1996. An analysis of the benefits and costs of CAR will be included in the final impact evaluation report, planned for late 1996. The CAR documentation study being conducted by Dr. Janice M. Hirota of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse is continuing and will provide additional reports on program implementation.

### ***References***

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## APPENDIX A

### DESCRIPTION OF CAR SERVICES DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

This description of CAR services during the first year of program implementation is intended to illustrate the kinds of activities included in CAR, based on Janice M. Hirota's documentation study (Hirota 1994). It should be emphasized that the service strategies and patterns vary widely across CAR programs as does level of participation by youth and families. Thus, not all of these services are available at all sites, nor do all eligible youth participate in all services. Additional information on patterns of service delivery and participation will be provided in subsequent reports.

Family-Focused Services. Conceptually, family services are the cornerstone of CAR programs. Case managers work with the caregiver to assess the family needs for services and develop and implement plans that address the needs of all members of the participating youth's household. Staffing levels call for small caseloads (13 to 18), frequent home visits, and intensive interaction with the youth's family.

Case managers help the family to access services, often in basic ways like providing transportation, encouraging participants to keep appointments, and acting as advocates for the youth or family with other agencies. Extreme examples include retrieving a runaway from another town, and testifying in court on behalf of a family. In addition, case managers assist the parent, or substitute for parents, by checking on the youth's school attendance, homework, and behavior. Case managers liberally distribute rewards and commendations for positive behavior and progress.

All CAR programs initially planned to include regular parental participation in programs such as: parenting skill development, therapy, and drug treatment, but have experienced problems with regular attendance. To encourage participation, CAR programs have sponsored special events for families featuring recreation, entertainment, and food. Such programs were attended by one-fifth of the participants in the first year. Examples include Christmas, Halloween, and Valentine's Day parties, awards banquets, a Gospelfest, youth performances, and trips. These events are designed to support family bonding, increased parental involvement in the youth's activities at school and in the program, and have increased involvement with other parents in a positive context.

Peer Group Activities. Another focus of CAR is on positive peer group activities. After-school and summer programs, including sports, games, arts, crafts, theater, and music have been made available through increased access to existing local programs and the development of special CAR activities. Some activities are one-time events like strawberry picking, others are week-long overnight camps or weekend camping at military bases, still others are day camp or sports activities for several months. Special outings have been well-attended, but attendance at regularly scheduled after-school recreational programs varies and is generally better when the activities are held at the school.



In addition to recreational activities, CAR programs include a variety of peer group activities to enhance personal social development. Examples are: self-esteem and life skills workshops, cultural heritage programs, and structured peer group discussions around issues such as sex, grooming, and social problems. The recreational and personal development activities vary widely in frequency, intensity, duration, and content, reflecting the range of ages, cultures, and resources in the CAR programs. However, all programs offer alternatives to hanging out without adult supervision in neighborhoods rife with gangs and drug dealers. Those including regular meetings around a core activity, (such as regularly scheduled rap sessions, overnight camping, and team activities) build networks of peers around pro-social values and activities.

Fostering cultural identity and pride is emphasized. The Savannah Uhuru program is centered around African American culture and commitment to the principle that it takes a village to raise a child. Activities include Harambee Circles and Rites of Passage for youth, and 4-day PRAISE (Parents Reclaiming African Information for Spiritual Enlightenment) workshops. Bilingual staff and therapists are provided in Bridgeport and Austin, where *Cara Y Corazon* parenting classes are offered. Special events, such as presentations in honor of Black History Month, engage the youth and families in joint celebration of their heritage.

Education and Work Preparation. Most CAR program youth are far behind in school. Despite the recognized importance of preparing youth to succeed in school, getting youth to participate in tutoring and homework assistance has proved difficult. Only one program has successfully encouraged more than half the youth to attend after-school tutoring. That program offered tutoring in the form of a computer lab, educational games led by local college students, or individual help. Another program gives CAR youth a \$10 per week incentive for perfect attendance at the regularly scheduled after-school tutoring program and the project's Harambee Circle which follows.

A potentially significant component from the perspective of strain theory are work experience opportunities arranged for some of the older (14 and 15 years old) youth. Work preparation activities offer modest stipends for assisting at the local library, working up to 10 hours a week in local businesses, or participating in vocational exploration programs.

Mentoring. Attachment to pro-social norms and a caring adult, particularly one viewed by the youth as powerful or effective in adults roles, can reinforce social control and act as a protective factor in preventing problem behavior. The case managers in all CAR programs serve as role models, establishing a personal relationship with the youth and family, encouraging positive behaviors, and assisting with problems. Preliminary observation indicates that many youth are also developing a positive, personal relationship with police which can be expected to contribute to social bonding. Police officers assigned to CAR teach DARE, self-esteem, life skills, or anger management classes in school and organize, or participate in, youth sports programs outside of school. The location in the school or in offices shared with case managers, has increased informal contacts between youth and these adults.

In addition, some youth who need a caring relationship with an adult have been matched to volunteer mentors, recruited and trained by local organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters or a local college. Because volunteer mentors have found higher than average rates of broken and missed appointments among these high risk youth, programs have responded with training for youth to prepare them for participation and have expanded the types of mentoring opportunities. One program achieved 14 successful matches (of 21 eligible youth), another matched 4 youth, and another 5 youth.

Combatting Neighborhood Criminal Activity. Preventing exposure to deviant role models and opportunities is expected to reduce the opportunities and incentives for youth to become involved in drug sales and gang activities. Police presence has been increased in and around school grounds and community police officers have been assigned to target neighborhoods to engage in pro-active crime prevention through interaction with the youth and neighborhood residents through meetings around neighborhood safety issues, presentations at CAR family events, and, in some cases, home visits.

Police enforcement activities have focused on controlling drug sales, particularly on routes to school, and combating gang activity. In two programs, juvenile probation officers participate in case conference planning meetings around youth needs and join case workers in helping reduce the risk of delinquency among court-involved youth.

Developing Service Networks. Developing services integration at the local level is aimed at creating a network of services to support positive development of neighborhood youth and families and thereby reducing neighborhood risk level. Strategies for achieving coordinated planning and integrated services include co-location of some service providers, regularly scheduled case conferencing attended by staff from multiple agencies, and on-going policy development around sensitive issues such as information sharing.

CAR programs take a leadership role in arranging collaboration with other agencies to provide services needed by high risk families. These have included medical checkups for all CAR youth in one program, intensive efforts to arrange stable housing in another, and counseling, treatment and mental health services. The goal in staffing, program content, and youth activities is to create a program that is compatible culturally with the neighborhood, builds on existing resources, and addresses needs identified as high priority by local areas.