

II. COST-EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS TO PREVENT DELINQUENCY AND CRIME

Based on a comprehensive review of the available evidence on crime prevention programs, we describe effective programs for children and youth in three major classes: primary prevention programs, secondary prevention programs, and juvenile offender programs. Primary prevention programs are interventions such as preschool programs that occur before children exhibit problems or anti-social behaviors. Secondary prevention programs are implemented during the early cycle of delinquency when misbehavior and conduct problems are evident, but prior to full blown delinquency. Juvenile offender programs, which are often referred to as treatment programs or tertiary prevention programs, are interventions that occur after youth have been arrested. The goal of juvenile offender programs is to prevent recidivism. For the present report, we limit our discussion of juvenile offender programs to non-residential programs and approaches that are delivered to juvenile offenders in the community.

Before describing the most effective programs from our review, we summarize broad principles that appear to make prevention and juvenile offender programs effective and, for many of them, exemplary.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The most effective primary and secondary prevention programs related to delinquency share a number of key principles. Though there

is great value in using established, proven programs, that is not always possible. There will always be new and emerging programs that do not yet have the evaluation data to document their impact. Drawing on a range of studies and comprehensive reviews [26-28], these principles can serve as guidelines to those who are developing new programs, wish to improve existing programs, or have the responsibility for making funding decisions about what is likely to work.

Primary and secondary prevention programs have similar principles of effectiveness. Effective programs are:

- **Delivered at a high dosage and intensity** – Effective programs tend to have relatively greater amounts of contact time with participants whether it be number of sessions, hours, weeks, or years.
- **Comprehensive** – Multi-component programs that address a variety of risk and protective factors are usually more effective than single-component programs.
- **Appropriately timed** – The most effective programs address relevant factors or processes at specific times of need, and when participants are most receptive to change.
- **Developmentally appropriate** – Programs should be age and developmentally appropriate for the target audience of children, youth, or adults.

- **Socio-culturally relevant** – Tailoring the program to the cultural traditions of youth and their families enhances recruitment, retention and sometimes outcome attainment.
- **Implemented by well-trained, effective staff** – The effectiveness of a program is tied to the staff’s personal characteristics such as efficacy and confidence, and their level of training, either by education or experience.
- **Supported by strong organizations** – Effective programs receive administrative support, have low employee turnover rates, and have staff members who share the same vision.
- **Implemented using varied, active methods** – Interactive skills training methods are much more likely than didactic lecturing to increase program effectiveness and client satisfaction.
- **Based on strong theory** – High-quality programs have a strong theoretical justification, are based on accurate information, and are supported by empirical research.
- **Evaluated regularly** – Staff members are able to make modifications and improve program effectiveness when they systematically document and reflect on implementation, processes, and results.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE JUVENILE OFFENDER PROGRAMS

Criminologists studying the effectiveness of approaches and programs for juvenile offenders [e.g., 9, 29, 30] have identified several principles of effective intervention. These principles are based on meta-analyses¹ of hundreds of pro-

¹ Meta-analysis is an increasingly common statistical technique for analyzing and comparing the findings of a body of previously conducted empirical studies. A meta-analysis is a study of existing studies that allows researchers to examine whether there are any systematic patterns or findings that emerge across studies.

gram evaluations and reviews of the records of thousands of adult and juvenile offenders [31]. These principles include:

- **The human service principle** – Punishment, control, and surveillance will be ineffective at changing offenders’ behavior if human services are not also provided.
- **The risk principle** – Offenders should be assigned to interventions and services based on level of risk of recidivism, and that it is possible to classify offenders by risk of re-offending.
- **The need principle** – Interventions should be selected based on the criminogenic needs (crime-related risk factors) of the individual juvenile offender, non-criminogenic needs are not worth targeting.
- **The responsivity principle** – This principle has two parts, based on responding to offenders’ learning styles and willingness to change:
 - Interventions should take a behavioral approach, based on cognitive and social learning theories, so that offenders can learn new behaviors (“general responsivity”)
 - Interventions should be “fine-tuned” to maximize response from individual offenders, based on their motivation, maturity, learning style, anxiety level, etc. (“specific responsivity”); and
- **The fidelity principle** – Programs should be implemented with integrity and fidelity to the original design, as relates to staff training and retention, duration and intensity of program contact, and caseloads for staff.

Application of the principles of effective intervention requires the use of an assessment tool that provides the information needed to draw conclusions about level of risk, criminogenic needs, and the appropriateness of available dis-

positions or diversion programs for an individual offender. Accurate assessment – above and beyond the screening typically used to determine whether a juvenile should be detained or referred for mental health services – is crucial to effective intervention [32]. Several states have developed standard assessments and require their use at juvenile intake [33, 34]. Wisconsin’s Juvenile Classification System [35] is currently used to assess offenders placed in juvenile correctional facilities, but could be used more widely with revision and re-validation.

SUMMARY OF SELECTED COST-EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Table 1 describes prevention and juvenile offender programs that have been demonstrated to be among the most successful and cost-effective programs in achieving their objectives, either specifically in reducing delinquency and criminal behavior, or for outcomes that place children at significant risk of criminal behavior. The programs featured are not the only ones known to be effective, but were selected because of their solid documentation of impact and, in many cases, the availability of good cost-benefit data. In addition, we felt that these programs served as strong examples for the particular category of program being highlighted.

Unlike the Washington State report, the emphasis in our report is on a select set of programs we consider to be among the “best bets” for delinquency prevention in Wisconsin and in other states. Of course, new evidence on emerging or established programs will further inform policy decisions and complement the evidence we present.

The selected programs and the evidence for their effectiveness are described in the review of programs and approaches that follows, in a more detailed table in Appendix A, and in Appendix B, which also includes contact information for individual programs. Other effective, evidence-based programs can be found in the program registries that are listed in Appendix C.

An important emphasis of this report is the economic benefits to society at large, as described above. The main categories of benefits for the programs we review are presented below in order of their typical contribution to economic benefits:

- Reduced costs for the administration and treatment of individuals in the justice system as juveniles and adults. For most studies, cost savings are projected over adulthood based on the available evidence on the program.
- Savings to crime victims including tangible (e.g., hospitalization) and intangible (e.g., pain and suffering) costs associated with delinquency and crime.
- Increased earnings and compensation of program participants in adulthood based on actual earnings, employment, or educational attainment at particular ages. Estimates are for projected lifetime earnings up to age 65.
- Increased tax revenues to state and federal governments based on estimated earnings and compensation.
- Reduced costs for K-12 remedial services including special education placement and grade retention.
- Reduced costs for the administration and treatment of children in the child welfare system due to reported child abuse and neglect. The tangible and intangible savings to maltreatment victims also are included.
- Reduced costs for the administration and provision of social services including welfare and food stamps.
- Reduced costs for substance abuse treatment and related services.

We note that for some programs there are unique benefit categories that are not listed above. In center-based early childhood interventions, for example, parents have increased time available to devote to educational, economic, or personal development. This is measured as a

benefit to program participants. Savings associated with reduced rates of teenage parenthood as well as health and mental health problems also are applicable. Seemingly non-economic outcomes such as achievement test scores and

conduct problem ratings can be converted to economic benefits on the basis of their documented links to educational attainment and juvenile crime [2].

TABLE 1.
Summary of Selected Effective Programs for Preventing Crime and Enhancing Well-Being

Program	Target group/ Focus	Intensity and length	Major crime prevention impacts	Impacts linked to crime prevention	Per Participant Costs and Benefits in \$2004		
					Benefits Costs	Net benefit (Benefits – Costs)	Return per \$1 invested
Primary Prevention							
<i>Preschool Education</i>							
Child-Parent Centers	Child/ Enrichment, Parent involvement	Part day, 1-2 years	Arrests, Incarceration up to age 24	Ed attainment Achievement Abuse & neglect	78,732 7,755	70,977	10.15
High/Scope Perry Preschool	Child/ Enrichment, Home visits	Part day, 1-2 years	Arrests, Incarceration up to age 40	Achievement Ed attainment Income	145,414 16,648 283,995 16,648	128,766 267,347	8.74 (age 27) 17.07 (age 40)
Abecedarian Project	Child/ Enrichment	Up to 8 years, including full day for 5 years	None reported	Ed attainment Achievement Mother employment	142,327 70,588	71,739	2.02
<i>Family Support</i>							
Nurse-Family Partnership – High risk	Parent/ Home visits	2 hrs biweekly, 2-2 ½ years	Arrests up to age 15	Abuse & neglect Substance use Teen pregnancy	37,041 7,324	29,717	5.06
Strengthening Families Program 10-14	Parent, child/ Groups	2 hrs weekly, 7-14 weeks	Conduct problems	Substance use Peer pressure	6,833 874	5,959	7.82

Program	Target group/ Focus	Intensity and length	Major crime prevention impacts	Impacts linked to crime prevention	Per Participant Costs and Benefits in \$2004		
					Benefits Costs	Net benefit (Benefits – Costs)	Return per \$1 invested
<i>Social-Emotional Learning</i>							
Skills, Opportunities, and Recognition	School population/ Parent and teacher training	Consistent through primary grades	Violent behavior	School behavior Achievement Alcohol misuse	14,810 4,712	10,100	3.14
Olweus Bullying Prevention Program	School population/ Improving school environment	Consistent through school years	Vandalism, fighting, theft, and bullying	School behavior	--	--	--
Secondary Prevention							
<i>Family Training</i>							
Family Effective- ness Training	Child, Family/ Training and therapy	1-1.5 hrs weekly 13 weeks	Conduct problems	Peer association Family functioning	--	--	--
<i>Social Skills Training</i>							
Positive Adolescent Choices Training	Child/ Social skills training	Unspecified	Aggression Violent behavior Arrests	None reported	--	--	--
<i>Mentoring</i>							
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Youth/ Mentoring	2-4 times monthly 12 months	Violent behavior	School behavior Achievement	4,166 4,117	49	1.01
<i>Vocational/Job Training</i>							
Job Corps	Youth/ Residential training	Full day, 4-6 months	Arrests Incarceration	Income Ed attainment Welfare use	22,883 15,804	7,079	1.45
Juvenile Offender Programs							
<i>Diversion</i>							
Adolescent Diver- sion Project	Youth/ Case mgmt, mentoring	6-8 hours per week, 18 weeks	Reduced recidivism	None reported	24,708 1,825	22,883	13.54

Program	Target group/ Focus	Intensity and length	Major crime prevention impacts	Impacts linked to crime prevention	Per Participant Costs and Benefits in \$2004		
					Benefits Costs	Net benefit (Benefits – Costs)	Return per \$1 invested
<i>Therapeutic Interventions</i>							
Multisystemic Therapy	Youth/ Family therapy	60 hours, 4 months	Re-arrests Out-of-home placement	Family function Mental health	15,395 5,832	9,563	2.64
Functional Family Therapy	Family/ Family therapy	8-12 hours	Re-offending Sibling delinquency	Family communication	29,111 2,197	26,914	13.25
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care*	Youth/ Foster care with therapeutic treatment	Residential, 6-9 months	Re-arrests Subsequent days incarcer- ated	Hard drug use	27,460* 2,524*	24,936*	10.88*
<i>Case Management/Multimodal Interventions</i>							
Repeat Offender Prevention	Youth/ Case mgmt; center- and home-based services	Daily, 12-18 months	Sustained petitions for new offenses	Drug use Completion of court-ordered obligations	--	--	--
<i>Standard Services**</i>							
Juvenile Court	Youth/ Formal hearing, adjudication, & disposition	2-3 hearings; length of supervision varies	N/A	N/A	<i>Average cost = 2,000</i>	N/A	N/A
Standard proba- tion	Youth/ Monitoring & supervision	Weekly contact, min. 12 months	N/A	N/A	<i>Annual cost = 2,160</i>	N/A	N/A
Juvenile Correc- tional Institution	Youth/ Confinement & treatment	Residential; length varies	N/A	N/A	<i>Annual cost = 68,255</i>	N/A	N/A

Note: The estimated economic benefits include actual and projected economic returns through adulthood. Estimates of both costs and benefits across studies are based on different sets of assumptions and different lengths of follow up. Estimates from the Washington State study are based on a different set of assumptions than those of the other reports.

* Costs and benefits for Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (TFC) are given in comparison to regular group home treatment. One year of TFC costs \$2,524 more than group home care for the average participant, and yields \$27,460 in benefits per participant, as compared to group home residents. All other program costs and benefits are stated in comparison to "no treatment."

** Standard services are included in the table for the purpose of cost comparison.