



*Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,  
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement  
Leaders, and Violence Survivors  
Preventing Crime and Violence*

**State Director**  
Bruce R. Clash  
**Deputy Director**  
Stephen L. Doster

## From Pennsylvania's Front Line Against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

As a statewide organization of more than 200 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders, and violence survivors, we are determined to see that dangerous criminals are put behind bars. But anyone who thinks that jailing a criminal undoes the agony of crime has not seen crime up close.

Pennsylvania's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the research-based programs that help kids get the right start in life—programs like Head Start, pre-kindergarten and educational child care, child abuse and neglect prevention, youth development activities for the after-school and summer hours, and intervention programs proven to help troubled kids.

Yet today, inadequate funding for these critical crime-prevention investments leaves thousands of children at needless risk of becoming violent or delinquent teens and adult criminals—and leaves every Pennsylvanian at risk of becoming a crime victim. In 2004, 48,230 violent crimes were reported to Pennsylvania police departments, an average of 132 per day.

**We call on the Commonwealth's federal, state and local officials to implement a four-part plan to dramatically reduce crime and violence, and help Pennsylvania's young people learn the skills and values they need to become good neighbors and responsible adults. While no plan can prevent every violent act, this common-sense approach—based on our experience and the latest research about what really works to fight crime—can make all of us safer and save tax dollars.**

### **State Law Enforcement organizations support this plan:**

- ✓ **Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania State Troopers Association**

Dozens of national and other state law enforcement and victim assistance organizations across the country have adopted similar resolutions supporting the components of the FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

## **Four Actions to Dramatically Reduce School and Youth Violence**

- **Provide all families access to quality pre-kindergarten and educational child care programs proven to reduce crime.**
- **Help at-risk parents improve their parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by offering in-home parenting coaching. Make sure child protective services have policies and resources sufficient to protect and heal abused and neglected children.**
- **Provide all school-age children and teens access to after-school youth development programs to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime."**
- **Identify troubled children and teens as early as possible, intervene and provide them and their parents with the training necessary to help them avoid crime.**

## 1. Provide all families access to quality pre-kindergarten and educational child care programs proven to reduce crime.

Law enforcement leaders have long known that intervening early in children's lives is the best way to prevent violence and crime. Rigorous social science and neuroscience studies now provide evidence that supports what many have known from experience: in the first few years of life, children's intellect and emotions, and even their ability to feel concern for others (a prerequisite to conscience) are being permanently shaped. When parents are at work trying to make ends meet, high quality programs for children, age birth to 5, can not only prepare them to succeed in school but also reduce later crime. For example:

- Chicago's publicly-funded Child-Parent Centers have served almost 100,000 three- and 4-year-olds since 1967. Researchers tracked 989 of those children and 550 similar children not in the program for 14 years. The children who did not participate were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. This program also cut child abuse and neglect (see Section 2).
- In Ypsilanti, Michigan, 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families who were randomly assigned to a group that did not receive preschool were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than those who were assigned to the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Perry Preschool program.

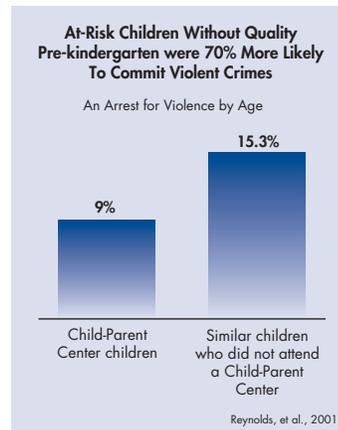
Nearly 60 percent of Pennsylvania's more than 836,000 children under age 6 have both parents or their only single parent in the workforce. Currently, Pennsylvania only marginally funds pre-kindergarten programs leaving a large percentage of unmet need. When parents are forced to leave their children in inadequate educational child care, we all pay a terrible price.

## 2. Help at-risk parents improve their parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by offering in-home parenting coaching. Make sure child protective services have policies and resources sufficient to protect and heal abused and neglected children.

In 2004, more than 4,600 children were abused or neglected in Pennsylvania. Studies show that being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be violent. It is imperative to expand parenting-coaching and family support programs that prevent children from being abused and neglected, reduce subsequent delinquency, and improve other outcomes for children. Research has proven the success of these programs:

- The Nurse-Family Partnership randomly assigned half of a group of at-risk families to receive visits by specially-trained nurses who provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Beginning during the mother's pregnancy and continuing until the child's second birthday, parents learned to manage stress, understand the health and nutrition needs of newborns, identify the signs of problems, make their home safe, and find resources such as doctors and other child care help. Rigorous research originally published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed the program could prevent as many as half of all cases of abuse or neglect among at-risk families. By the time the children of the mothers in the program were age 15, they had 59 percent fewer arrests than the children of mothers left out of the program.
- Chicago's Child-Parent Centers preschool program for 3- and 4-year olds from poor neighborhoods includes a strong parental involvement requirement. Children who participated in the preschool program and similar children who did not participate were tracked by researchers until age 18. The study found that abuse and neglect of children in the program was cut in half.

There must be a national and statewide commitment to provide child protective, foster care and adoption services with comprehensive policies, resources, and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal children who have been abused and neglected.



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*“Back-end-only, wait-for-the-crime-so-we-can-throw-away-the-key approaches can't bring back Darryl or any other murder victim. We need to fight crime not just after the fact, but also before people are killed.”*

– Genell and Pete Cozart, Farrell, PA (Mercer County)  
Son Darryl was murdered on March 1, 1997

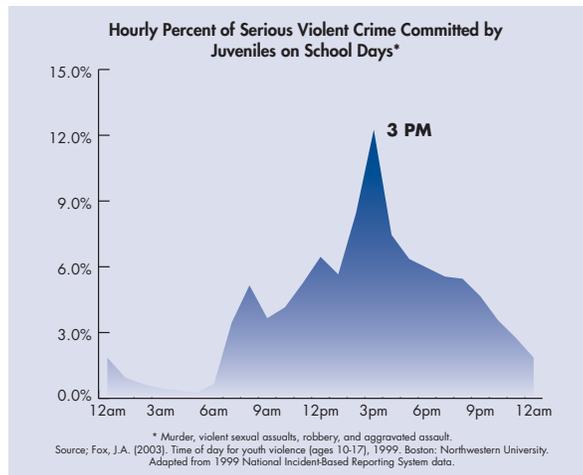
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### 3. Provide all school-age children and teens access to after-school youth development programs to shut down the “Prime Time for Juvenile Crime.”

In the hours after the school bell rings—when thousands of children and teens hit the streets with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision—violent juvenile crime soars and the prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the peak hours for juvenile crime are from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. These are also the hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime. Being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that 8th-graders will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.

Quality youth development programs in the after-school hours can cut crime immediately and transform this prime time for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect both kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut smoking and drug use, while helping youngsters develop the respect, discipline and skills they need to become contributing citizens. For example:

- Five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the housing projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity.
- Among kids with prior histories of arrest, those who did not participate in San Francisco’s Bayview Safe Haven after-school program were twice as likely to be arrested during the six-month initial “intervention” period as program participants. Among kids with no prior histories or arrest, those who did not participate were three times more likely to be arrested during that same intervention period.
- Young people who were randomly assigned to a Big Brother or Big Sister were about half as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly one third less likely to hit someone compared to those who were assigned to a waiting list.



### 4. Identify troubled children and teens as early as possible, intervene and provide them and their parents with the training necessary to help them avoid crime.

Children who are overly aggressive and at risk for problems later in life can be screened and identified at an early age and helped with mental health or other services.

- The Incredible Years program provides training in problem solving and social issues for families of children age two to eight with overly aggressive behavior problems. Researchers report that it has been able to stop the cycle of aggression for approximately two-thirds of the families receiving help.
- A study found that 40 percent of school bullies had three or more criminal convictions as adults. Tested anti-bullying programs, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, cut bullying by as much as half.

Many youths who are already involved in crime can become productive citizens with the right help.

- Three intensive family intervention programs that provide the parents or foster parents of violent juvenile offenders with effective tools to better control the children’s behaviors have been proven to cut crime. Research shows that repeat arrests of youths in Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care have been cut by as much as half compared to the re-arrest rate of youths not receiving this help.
- Another approach, known as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, helps serious juvenile offenders learn and use social skills to avoid re-offending. Research studies show CBT reduces re-arrests among troubled youths by one-third to two-thirds compared to those not receiving the services.

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*“To make Pennsylvania safe, we must be as willing to guarantee our children access to quality school readiness and after-school programs as we are to guarantee a criminal room and board in a prison cell.”*

– Sheriff Robert E. Fyock,  
Indiana County

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*“We need to invest in Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable kids so they’ll never become America’s most wanted adults. Quality pre-kindergarten programs and youth development training during the after-school hours are among the most powerful weapons to reduce crime and violence. These programs really work to help families and communities teach kids the values and skills to become good citizens instead of criminals.”*

– Chief David R. Elliott, Scranton Police Department

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## **The Bottom Line: Investing in Kids Saves Lives and Money**

When our Commonwealth fails to invest in children, all Pennsylvanians pay far more later—not just in lost lives, but also in tax dollars. Pennsylvania’s General Fund will actually have more money to dedicate to other uses in the future by investing today in programs to help kids get the right start in life. Research clearly demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of these programs:

- Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation’s Perry Preschool program produced a net savings of \$17 for every dollar invested. Total savings were \$259,000 per child, \$172,000 of it in crime costs.
- A study conducted by researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis showed that the return on investment in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program was 16 percent after adjusting for inflation. Seventy-five percent of that return went to taxpayers in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs, and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent after adjusting for inflation. Thus, an initial investment of \$1,000 in a program like Perry Preschool would return over \$19,000 in 20 years while the same initial investment in the stock market would return less than \$4,000.
- Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country saves \$1.7 million.

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*“The most successful prosecutions can never undo the agony inflicted on crime victims. That is why Pennsylvania must invest in the programs proven to help kids get the right start so they never become criminals.”*

– The Honorable Lynne M. Abraham  
Philadelphia District Attorney

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### **Law Enforcement United in Calling for Crime-Prevention Investments in Kids**

- In Pennsylvania, 76 percent of police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors, in a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, agreed that if we do not make greater investments in pre-kindergarten and early education programs for children now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs.
- In response to a different Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, an overwhelming 71 percent of the nation’s police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors chose providing “more educational child care programs for preschool age children and after-school programs for school-age youngsters” as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime. A poll showed that 80 percent of law enforcement leaders believe that expanding resources for child abuse prevention and foster care programs will significantly reduce youth crime and violence.

For citations of studies referred to above visit [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org)

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Launched in 2001, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS PENNSYLVANIA is a bipartisan, anti-crime organization led by more than 200 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. It is supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations, and receives no funds from federal, state, or local governments. It is a project of Washington, DC-based FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national, non-profit organization led by more than 2,500 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors.

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