

EXCERPTS FROM INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON
VIOLENCE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT REPORT

"Most adolescents are on a healthy path towards productive adult lives. There is evidence, however, that 25% of adolescents are at significant risk of veering off that path because they engage in numerous behaviors with negative consequences, such as alcohol or other drug abuse, unprotected sexual activity, delinquency, or violence. Another 25% of adolescents are at moderate risk because they engage in fewer of these behaviors."

"The research suggests that some young men with few skills and limited legal work opportunities can earn up to 2 to 4 times as much in criminal activities than they are likely to earn in entry-level jobs."

"40% of the time adolescents are awake is discretionary time not taken up by school, homework, chores, meals, or employment. Many adolescents spend almost all of this time without adult companionship or supervision but alone, with peers, or with adults who may serve as negative or exploitative influences (from Carnegie study). A recent study found that 27% of eighth graders spent two or more hours alone after school, and that low-income youth were more likely than higher income youth to be home alone for three or more hours" (Dept. of Education, OERI, NCES).

"In recent years, the infrastructure of America's low-income rural and urban communities has declined. Public schools in many areas have deteriorated and the quality of public education has fallen, city parks and recreation centers are in disrepair, and financial support for youth facilities and programs has decreased. Thus, concentrated high risk environments for youth have formed."

"Youth who are neither enrolled in school, employed, or serving in the military need social supports and positive activities to prevent their involvement in risky behaviors. The research concerning these youth describes them in terms of labor market inactivity. A 1990 study showed that high inactivity rates began soon after high school: after graduation, 19.5% of African-Americans, 14.3% of Hispanics, and 32% of whites were not working or in school, and two years later 50% of African-Americans, 42% of Hispanics, and 32% of whites who had been inactive remained inactive."

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I. Overview

In 1992, there were approximately 41 million young people between the ages of 14 and 24 in the United States. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Projections, July 1992) In 1990 there were about 20 million young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15. About 68% of young adolescents are non-Hispanic white, the remaining 32% are African-American (15%), Hispanic (12%), Asian/Pacific Islander (3%) and American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut (1%). By the year 2000, the number of young adolescents is expected to exceed 23 million, and its ethnic composition will change to approximately 66% non-Hispanic white and 34% other racial and ethnic groups. (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990, cited in Carnegie Corporation, A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Non-School Hours, 1992)

Most adolescents are on a healthy path towards productive adult lives. There is evidence, however, that 25% of adolescents are at significant risk of veering off that path because they engage in numerous behaviors with negative consequences, such as alcohol or other drug abuse, unprotected sexual activity, delinquency or violence. Another 25% of adolescents are at moderate risk because they engage in fewer of these behaviors. (Joy Dryfoos, Adolescents at Risk, Oxford University Press, 1989)

Deteriorating Neighborhoods and Limited Opportunities

Over the last 20 years, structural changes in the U.S. economy have combined with increases in the number of single-parent households over the last 20 years to cause a significant deterioration in the economic position of adolescents. While this decline affects youth of all races, sexes and levels of education, it is particularly acute for youth without a high school diploma and high school graduates who have not obtained a four-year college degree. (National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, Losing Generations: Adolescents in High Risk Settings, 1993)

The statistics tell a dramatic story. The proportion of young adolescents (ages 10-15) who live in poverty rose from 14% in 1969 to 16% in 1978 to 20% in 1990. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991, cited in Carnegie) About 3 million young people between the ages of 10 to 18 and almost 1.2 million mothers younger than 26 (including 40,000 younger than 18) currently receive AFDC. (Children's Defense Fund, The Adolescent and Young Adult Fact Book, 1991) About one in four of the 30% of all adolescents in rural areas live in poverty, (Carnegie) and about 4 million of

the country's poor youth live in public and assisted housing projects (Pat Arnaudo, HUD). While children in single-parent families are most likely to be poor, many two-parent families have experienced a decline in their standard of living. Without the income provided by women entering the workforce and increasing the number of hours they work, incomes for 60% of two-parent families would have been lower in 1989 than in 1979. (National Research Council)

The number of poor neighborhoods has increased over the last decade. The incidence of neighborhoods in which at least 20% of families are poor has increased from 34% to 39% of cities' census tracts. During the same period, the proportion of extremely poor neighborhoods -- those with a poverty rate of 40% or more -- increased from approximately 10% to 14% of city census tracts. (William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 1989)

The increase in poor neighborhoods is linked to a contraction of legitimate employment opportunities for youth. The shift to a service-oriented and high-technology economy and the loss of manufacturing jobs in central cities has reduced the number of job opportunities. These developments explain the loss of average real earnings for young adults between 1979 and 1988.

The increasingly limited economic opportunities for adolescents are also reflected in changes in the youth unemployment rate and the proportion of youth who are living at home with their parents. In 1991, about 15% of teenagers and 8%-9% of young adults in the labor force were officially unemployed. (Children's Defense Fund) Employment rates among African-American and other non-white youth ages 16-17 declined from 40% in 1954 to 15% in 1992. For African-American and other non-white youth ages 18-19, the employment rate dropped from 67% in 1954 to 34% in 1992.

Inability to find high-paying jobs without a college degree or specialized skills has made more adolescents dependent on their families longer. Over the past 15 years, the percentage of young people living with their families rose steadily to 54% at age 24 and 30% at age 29. (National Research Council)

For some youth who cannot rely on their families for economic support, lack education, and face discrimination in the job market, crime can appear to serve as a rational alternative to legitimate employment. The research suggests that some young men with few skills and limited legal work opportunities can earn up to 2 to 4 times as much in criminal activities than they are likely to earn in entry-level jobs. (National Research Council)

The significant increase over the last 20 years in the number of single-parent families is another reason for the large number of adolescents living in poverty. About one-half of all marriages now end in divorce, which is twice the divorce rate in 1960.

Approximately 25% of all births are to unmarried women. As a result, about 25% of all children live with only one parent, which represents a doubling of the rate since 1970. About 50% of all children will live in a single-parent home before they reach the age of 18 and will spend an average of 6 years with a single parent. (National Research Council)

Adolescent girls are becoming single parents in increasing numbers. While births to unmarried women made up only 15% of all births to adolescents in 1960, and 30% in 1970, by 1989 more than 67% of teen mothers were unmarried. (National Research Council) Families headed by a single parent, adolescent or not, are more likely to be poor. Poverty rates are almost six times higher for single-parent families than for two-parent families. About 87% of single parents are women. (National Research Council)

The growth in the number of youth living in non-traditional families, or without families at all, is significant. Drug abuse, sexual or physical abuse, and neglect have resulted in an increasing number of youth living in non-traditional arrangements, such as with non-parent relatives, in foster homes, in shelters or on the street. The total number of children in foster care rose from 273,500 in 1986 to 429,000 in 1991 (GAO, Foster Care: Federal Policy on the Title IV-E Share of Training Costs, November 3, 1993).] There are approximately 1.3 million youth today who are runaways or homeless, because their families have been evicted, their parents have pushed them out of the home, or abusive situations have made it impossible for youth to stay. Most of these youth live in shelters or on the street. These youth come from all socioeconomic strata and are at highest risk for involvement in violence and other risky behaviors like drug use and prostitution. (USDHHS, Administration for Children and Families, Runaway and Homeless Youth Program: Fiscal Year 1993 Final Priorities, Federal Register, May 18, 1993)

How Youth Spend Their Time

A 1992 study conducted by the Carnegie Corporation determined that 40% of the time adolescents are awake is discretionary time not taken up by school, homework, chores, meals or employment. It also found that many adolescents spend almost all of this time without adult companionship or supervision but alone, with peers, or with adults who may serve as negative or exploitive influences. (Carnegie) A recent study found that 27% of eighth graders spent two or more hours alone after school, and that low-income youth were more likely than higher income youth to be home alone for three or more hours. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: A Profile of the American Eighth Grader, 1990, cited in Carnegie)

In recent years, the infrastructure of America's low-income rural and urban communities has declined. Public schools in many areas have deteriorated and the quality of public education has fallen, city parks and recreation centers are in disrepair, and financial support for youth facilities and programs has decreased. (Carnegie) Thus, concentrated high risk environments for youth have formed.

While all young people can benefit from community supports, positive alternatives are especially important for youth who are not in school or who are at risk of dropping out. Approximately one quarter of all urban schools have dropout rates of around 50%. Dropouts are more likely to be from poor families and single parent households, have parents who are not heavily involved in their lives, and live in urban areas. Dropouts are also more likely to have a handicapping condition, engage in delinquent behavior, be retained in grade and truant from school, be pregnant or a parent, have poor grades, and work more than 15 hours a week. While dropout prevention programs have traditionally been geared to high school students, there is now a movement to begin dropout prevention programs in middle school or before. (National Research Council)

The importance of dropout prevention efforts is made clear from the fact that about one in three of the 400,000 young people who dropped out of high school between October 1989 and October 1990 were unemployed in 1991. Every year, high school dropouts "cost" this country approximately \$340 billion in lost productivity and tax revenue. That amount is 50% more than the United States' year expenditure on public and private education from preschool to postsecondary levels. It does not include the cost of welfare benefits that will be required for some dropouts, or the cost of prison for others. (Children's Defense Fund)

In addition to school dropouts, youth who are neither enrolled in school, employed, or serving in the military are need social supports and positive activities to prevent their involvement in risky behaviors. The research concerning these youth describes them in terms of labor market inactivity. A 1990 study showed that high inactivity rates begin soon after high school: after graduation 19.5% of African-Americans, 14.3% of Hispanics, and 32% of whites were not working or in school, and two years later 50% of African-Americans, 42% of Hispanics and 32% of whites who had been inactive remained inactive. (R.M. Fernandez, Structural Factors in Hispanic Youth Employment, 1990, cited in National Research Council)

Involvement in High Risk Behavior

The average young person is resilient enough to cope with the stressful transitions typical of adolescence. These include first sexual experiences and relationships, school transitions,

peer group pressures, changing relationships with parents, and defining identity. Youth in this age group must cope with the pressure of making decisions, often with considerable peer pressure, about illegal drugs, alcohol, smoking, and driving while intoxicated. Some also face parental divorce or separation, poverty, physical or sexual abuse, or discrimination at school or work. However, it is reassuring to note that only between 10 and 20% of adolescents--the same proportion as adults--exhibit severe emotional disturbance. (Stuart T. Hauser and Mary Kay Bowlds, "Stress, Coping and Adaptation," in At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent, S. Shirley Feldman and Glen R. Elliott, eds., Harvard University Press, 1990).

A large number of adolescents engage in alcohol and other drug use, unprotected sexual activity and use of cigarettes. According to a 1991 National Institute on Drug Abuse survey of high school seniors, one-third of seniors reported having drunk at least five drinks in a row at least once during a 2-week period, 17% reported monthly use of marijuana, and about 19% reported smoking cigarettes on a daily basis. (Johnston and Bachman, Monitoring the Future: The National High School Senior Survey, 1992) About one-half of all sexually active teenagers have unprotected sexual intercourse, and about 2.5 million adolescents contract a sexually transmitted disease each year. (National Research Council) AIDS is the fast growing cause of death among young adults, and those most at risk of contracting it are runaways, those involved in prostitution, intravenous drug users, incarcerated youth, and those with homosexual experiences. (National Research Council)

The use of alcohol and other drugs is risky, especially because of its links to violent behavior. Alcohol is believed to lower inhibitions and is a factor in at least 55% of all fights and assaults in the home. In about 65% of all homicides, the perpetrator, victim, or both had been drinking. (American Psychological Association, Violence and Youth: Psychology's Response, Volume I: Summary Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993) In addition, drugs that are addictive and expensive, such as heroin and cocaine, are linked to violent behavior. In 1984, the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimated that at least 10% of homicides occur during drug sales. Youth involved in the sale of drugs are at greater risk of becoming involved in violent acts. (American Psychological Association)

Despite concern about adolescent involvement in risky behavior, there is a difference between normal experimentation and enduring patterns. Experimentation with the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, sexual activity, and juvenile delinquency is widespread during adolescence. (Dryfoos; Terri Moffitt, "Adolescence-Limited and Life Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy," Psychological Review, Vol. 100, No. 4,

1993) There has emerged a consensus in the research literature that problem behavior among adolescents are interrelated, so that many who engage in one type will also engage in others. (Dryfoos; National Research Council; Martha Burt, Gary Resnick, and Nancy Matheson, Comprehensive Service Integration Programs for At-Risk Youth, for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992; D.W. Osgood, "Covariation of Risk Behaviors During Adolescence." Background paper for U.S. Office of Technology Assessment Study on Adolescent Health, U.S. Congress, 1989)

Determining those at highest risk of engaging in problem behaviors is complex and requires an understanding of the interplay between individual characteristics and environment. One group of researchers suggests that early indications of risk can be found in "risk markers"--such as involvement with the child welfare system. (Burt, Resnick and Matheson) This approach implies that environments can be viewed as "high risk" and vulnerable youth described as "youth in high risk situations." High risk environments can include the family, school, neighborhood, or larger community.

It is also possible to identify some youth who are inherently at risk of negative outcomes. Children who have suffered prenatal drug or alcohol exposure, exposure to parents who use alcohol or drugs, and physical or sexual abuse at young ages are examples of those who are "at risk" of negative outcomes. Sometimes intensive interventions or positive environmental influences can ameliorate the effects of early damage and enable the child to avoid later problems. Negative interventions or influences could have the opposite effect. (Doreen Koretz, National Institute of Mental Health, USDHHS)

Involvement in Violence

Young people are at risk of involvement in violence as participants, victims and witnesses; youth who live in low-income areas are at greater risk. Adolescents are 2 1/2 times more likely to be victims of violent crimes than those over age 20. (American Psychological Association) According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the three leading causes of death for all youth ages 15-24 are unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide. While homicide is the second leading cause of death for youth in this age group, it is the leading cause of death for African-American males and female of this age. (USDHHS, Centers for Disease Control, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1990) Rates of suicide for adolescents have almost tripled since 1960 and are now second only to the rates for persons over 65. More than 5,000 adolescents kill themselves each year, and approximately 400,000 attempt suicide. (National Research Council)

Firearms play a key role in the injury and death. CDC reports that guns are involved in about 75% of the killings by African-

American youth. (American Psychological Association) Between 1979 and 1989, there was a 61% increase in homicides by shootings by 15-19-year-old white and African-American youth. During the same period, the rate of homicides by objects other than guns declined 29%. (American Psychological Association) In 1987, firearms were involved in 68% of all murders of adolescents and 83% of all adolescent suicides. (National Research Council) In 1989, 80% of the homicide victims aged 10-19 years old were killed with guns. (Vital Statistics of the United States 1989, Vol. 2, Mortality, Part A, National Center for Health Statistics, 1992, cited in Daniel Webster, Patricia Gainer and Howard Champion, "Weapon Carrying among Inner-City Junior High School Students: Defensive Behavior vs. Aggressive Delinquency," American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 83, No. 11, November 1993)

Guns are available to adolescents both at school and at home. The 1991 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by CDC revealed that 20% of high school students (32% males, 8% females) reported carrying a weapon at least once during the past 30 days. In a 1993 Harris poll, 59% of the students surveyed said firearms were "easily obtainable" and 35% said that it would take them less than one hour to acquire a firearm. Approximately 50% of American households have guns, and half of these are handguns. (American Psychological Association) A recent study indicates that keeping a firearm in the home almost triples the chances that someone will be killed on the premises. (New England Journal of Medicine)

A small proportion of youth join gangs, and the absolute amount of violence committed by gang members is relatively small. Gang involvement is a concern, however, because of the increase in the amount and severity of gang violence during the past two decades. In addition, homicide and aggravated assault are three times more likely to be committed by gang members than by delinquents. (American Psychological Association)

Youths join gangs for a number of reasons, including the desire for connection, belonging, self-esteem, and self-definition. They also join to find friendship, pride, an identity separate from their families, status, excitement, and acceptance. All of these are normal developmental needs for adolescents. (American Psychological Association) While male gang members outnumber female gang members by 20 to 1, female involvement in gang violence is believed to be increasing. (American Psychological Association)

Adolescents who are not gang members may engage in less serious forms of violent activity, such as physical fighting with their peers. The YRBS reported that 8% of students surveyed had been in at least one physical fight that resulted in an injury requiring treatment by a doctor or nurse in the past 30 days.

(USDHHS, CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1990)

Violence has psychological effects on young people, even if they are not the victims of the violent act. A recent survey of first and second graders in Washington, D.C. found that 45% of the children had witnessed muggings, 31% had witnessed shootings, and 39% had seen dead bodies. (American Psychological Association) Posttraumatic stress has been observed among children who witness violent acts. This syndrome includes sleep difficulties, anxiety, loss of interest in significant activities, and attention difficulties among its effects. (American Psychological Association) While there is no accurate measure of the number psychologically affected by violence, the proportion of children who received professional psychological help increased by 50% from 1981 to 1988. (American Psychological Association)

Paths to Violent Behavior

Factors affecting a child's engagement in violent behavior as a youth or young adult include childrearing conditions, emotional and cognitive development, sex role socialization, peer relationships, poverty, and media influences. According to the American Psychological Association, however, the strongest predictor of a child's involvement in violence is a history of previous violence, whether as a participant, victim or witness.

Research on antisocial behavior indicates that, while the tendency of an individual to exhibit aggressive and antisocial behaviors shows a great deal of continuity over time, the prevalence of antisocial behavior temporarily increases almost tenfold during adolescence. (Doreen Koretz, National Institute of Mental Health, USDHHS; Moffitt) One researcher describes two distinct pathways to youth aggression and antisocial pathways that account for these seemingly incompatible facts. (Moffitt)

The first path, which involves a small group of children (between 4% and 9% of the population), begins early in life and persists over time. These children have serious motor and cognitive problems, poor impulse control, and exhibit problem behaviors before age 3, especially in high risk environments. They may begin life in very high risk environments and with physical damage due to a variety of factors such as poor prenatal nutrition, lead exposure, and maternal alcohol or drug abuse. They may also have difficult temperaments, making it difficult for caretakers to provide positive and loving care. A wide variety of risk factors may also contribute to parenting problems that lead to increasingly antisocial behavior by the young child. In turn, the child's acting out behaviors contribute to school failure and rejection by peers. The early adolescent who lacks positive bonds to family, school and prosocial peers may associate with antisocial peers. Behavior problems then increase in range, rate and seriousness, and associated problems including

alcohol and other drug abuse emerge. (Koretz; Moffitt)

The second path involves a much larger group of children who are antisocial only during adolescence. These children may mimic the behavior of the first group in order to achieve status, power, and privilege. For this group, adolescent acting out can be considered normative rather than deviant. Youth may cease engaging in this behavior when legitimate adult roles become available and the consequences of crime become too costly in terms of their futures. (Koretz; Moffitt)

Although both paths contribute to the prevalence of aggressive and antisocial behavior in adolescence, different prevention strategies are suggested. For the persistent, early starting group, sustained and coordinated interventions involving family, school, and peer group may be necessary to deal with the multitude of risk factors which they face. For the group beginning this behavior in adolescence, interventions may need to focus on providing opportunities for positive adult roles, such as mentoring, job skills training, and job placement. The effects of discrimination may be particularly damaging for the latter group. (Koretz)

II. Programs and Policies

There is no coherent Federal "youth policy". Federal programs addressing the needs of youth tend to be fragmented, housed within several different Federal departments and multiple offices within those Departments. Furthermore, most programs are designed to combat specific youth problems, rather than to prevent problems from occurring, improve the environments in which youth live and foster the overall positive development of youth. The majority of Federal dollars currently devoted to youth are spent on their incarceration.

Most people who work with youth directly agree that the categorical punitive, and crisis-oriented approach to youth policy has proven ineffective. A new, preventive approach that requires collaboration and coordination among existing Federal, State and local programs to provide comprehensive services and positive alternative activities for youth is needed. This approach would improve the environments in which youth live in addition to addressing their individual behavior. It will involve youth in the design and implementation of youth-serving programs. It will also require a significant amount of coordination between the public and private sectors. The development of youth policy must become the responsibility of all sectors of our society.

Promising Strategies

Discussions with representatives from youth programs,

foundations, research institutions and universities, and the experience of Federal policy analysts and program planners have indicated that there are a number

- Involving youth in the formation and development of policy and programs to focus on their strengths, address their needs and reduce their involvement in violence. We have begun to understand the great sense of alienation and disconnection that many youth (particularly those in high-risk areas) feel from their own communities in particular and society in general. Youth have indicated through their behavior and in their discussions with those in the field their need for opportunities to establish their self worth and receive affirmation of their importance to society. A number of successful programs have been able to use youth in the development and implementation of programs.

New York City's YOUTHLINE is a toll-free confidential hotline available 24 hours a day, every day, staffed entirely by trained and employed young people working under the supervision of experienced professionals. YOUTHLINE provides an outlet for young people to talk with their peers about their concerns and fears. In addition, with the assistance of a geographic-based computer system and an extensive database, YOUTHLINE is able to provide callers with detailed information about youth-related programs and services located as close as a block or two from their homes. The information is obtained by youth who live in the community.

- Developing, enhancing and promoting youth competence (in skills development), connection to their families, communities and society at large and fostering their ability to make positive contributions. The lack of self-esteem among many youth and the lack of a clear place and role in the community and society are seen as major factors contributing to the alienation of youth in society. Many programs attribute their success to the fact that they help youth to see and understand their own value in relation to others and to the fact that programs convey a sense of respect and pride in the positive contributions that youth can make.

The Teens as Resources Against Drugs (TARAD) program was created as a demonstration program by the National Crime Prevention Council, a nonprofit organization designed to enable people to prevent crime and build safe, caring communities. TARAD is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U. S. Department of Justice to provide funds and technical assistance to three sites (New York City, Evansville, Indiana and communities in South Carolina) to demonstrate how

youth can be used to assist their communities in the fight against drug abuse. TARAD offers the opportunity to select a community drug prevention issue or situation, decide on action to address it, and obtain funds to implement the strategy. More than 3,000 youths developed nearly 100 projects in less than two years. Projects, on average, cost less than \$900 each and included the development of murals with anti-drug messages on corners formerly frequented by dealers, the development of teen helpers in elementary school, and community health fairs.

In the San Francisco Bay area of California, public libraries have involved youth in developing outreach programs. The San Lorenzo Branch Library of the Alameda County System sponsored youth forums on topics that teens identified as major needs (including jobs and job skills, multicultural relations, health and sexuality) and formed a teen advisory council to suggest ideas about materials the library should acquire for its collection.

- Intervening early in the lives of youth and providing sustained and involved contact with them over a long period of time. Programs that reach youth early and follow them into adulthood provide youth a stable force in their lives and give them a sense that the programs and their are invested in their growth and development.

The Futures Program of the Countee Cullen Beacon program, located in Central Harlem, New York, works with a small group of youths ages 11 -13 to provide job readiness and entrepreneurial training, computer programming, and sexuality awareness workshops. These services will be available to these young people through college.

- Responding in a way that treats youth as individuals, rather than treating them as a monolithic group. Programs and policies must understand, acknowledge, and respect the diversity among youth, and foster an acceptance for diversity in youth, their families, the community and greater society. Youth need to feel acceptance from many important sources as they struggle to explore issues about their own identity and to accept themselves. Programs must also acknowledge the many stressors that youth feel (including institutionalized racism and discrimination against youth of color, gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, and runaway and homeless youth).

This is a characteristic of all successful youth-serving programs.

- Empowering community leaders and institutions to play a more

active role in guiding and assisting youth. This fosters communities' ability to develop safe and acceptable recreational and leisure time activities for youth as well as connecting the community and its institutions to youth development. Community empowerment strategies that include methods of economically empowering communities are particularly effective, as they provide youth with the opportunity to acquire skills that will allow them to function within and contribute to the economies of their community and their nation. These also provide a socially acceptable alternative to involvement in gangs and drugs as a means of meeting youths' economic and social needs.

Texas City Action Plan to Prevent Crime (T-CAP) engaged seven of the most populous cities of Texas in producing long and short term comprehensive crime prevention action plans. In each city T-CAP aimed to create a comprehensive, citywide crime prevention plan spurred by the leadership of the mayor and grounded in a diverse citizens' coalition. The process was designed to include an assessment of city needs; development of both long- and short-term goals; use of task forces to involve residents and draw on specialized expertise; a process of official approval; and a specific blueprint for implementation. T-CAP's objective was to provide a blueprint help communities and neighborhoods reclaim themselves. Participating cities include San Antonio, Fort Worth, Houston, Dallas, Arlington and Corpus Christi. T-CAP is an initiative of the National Crime Prevention Council and is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice.

- Supporting families of youth and involvement of family members in programs that respond to youth issues. Programs that have been successful have indicated the great need to involve family members of youth in intervention and the great need for families to feel supported within their communities. Although, mentor programs have proven successful in providing youth with positive adult involvement, youth and program professionals have indicated that parents and other family members remain the most influential persons in the lives of most youth. Strategies that foster familial support and involvement in youth lives are extremely important.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Basic Center model, for instance, follows this family support approach. While specifically addressing the needs of runaway and homeless youth, these centers have as their primary goal the effort to help families to succeed together.

The Challengers Boys and Girls Club of South-Central Los

Angeles provides another example of active and positive family involvement. More than 200 parents are involved in club activities every month, teaching arts and crafts skills, photography, sports and computer literacy or providing after school transportation and support services. On any given day 25 to 40 parents, grandparents, foster parents on-site at the club, so that youth can seek them out for discussion or guidance.

- Connecting youth services to existing institutions; particularly educational institutions. Improving the connection between youth and educational institutions enhances the ability of these institutions to provide comprehensive and responsive services to youth. Strengthening the learning environment is key to youth development, as educational institutions provide youth with the skills they need to become productive adults and provide them with a forum to explore social and emotional issues in a neutral and non-threatening environment.

The High Risk Youth Program of CSAP incorporates conflict resolution strategies into their programs that are often located within educational settings. These programs are culturally sensitive and offer developmentally appropriate activities that have been used with children as young as kindergarten age.

- Viewing youth development, violence and crime prevention as a community wide strategy. Linking law enforcement, social services and community policing together to ensure that youth developmental needs and community safety needs are attended to simultaneously have proven to be an effective method of bringing the community together on behalf of youth.

The Youth Gang Drug Prevention program, administered by the Administration for Children and Families, funds community based consortia which organize public and private community-based organizations in an effort to address the issues of gang involvement, violence and drug use. Their strategy is to allow the community to identify problems and plan and implement solutions to those problems.

Operation Weed and Seed is a multi-agency strategy headed by the Department of Justice designed to first "weed out" violent crime, gang activity, drug use, and drug trafficking in targeted high-crime neighborhoods and then to "seed" the target areas by restoring these neighborhoods through social and economic revitalization. The Weed and Seed strategy recognizes the importance of linking and integrating Federal, State, and local law enforcement and criminal justice efforts with Federal, State, and local social

services and private sector and community efforts to maximize the impact of existing programs and resources. It also recognizes the paramount importance of community involvement and empowerment. The United States Attorneys coordinate Federal involvement and funding with assistance from the Office of Justice Programs, the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Education, Transportation, Agriculture, and Commerce and the Small Business Administration.

- Fostering community and systemwide collaboration for the development of policy, strategies and the integration of services to respond comprehensively to youth needs. Responding in a categorical, piecemeal way to youth problems has proven unsuccessful in curbing violence and/or meeting the real life needs of youth.

A program in Texas, San Antonio Fighting Back, is a comprehensive drug and crime prevention and community development program. The goal of the program is to establish a continuum of care to effectively address alcohol and other drug abuse through a comprehensive prevention, intervention, treatment and relapse prevention program. By consolidating resources and creating a single community-wide system of prevention, early identification, treatment and aftercare, the program seeks to achieve a reduction in the demand for and illegal use of alcohol and other drugs and, in so doing, to decrease violence.

New York City's Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families provide a variety of social, educational, cultural and employment programs and services that seek to involve the entire community in revitalizing the city's most devastated neighborhoods. Its programs include offering youth help with homework, opportunities for participation in sports and the arts, job readiness and employment training as well as family support and family preservation services for families in crisis.

III. Suggested Remedies

RECOMMENDATIONS

Factors influencing youth behavior are powerful, often long-term and pervasive. To be most effective, interventions should have similar characteristics. Efforts to change the environment should be concentrated and focused in intensity and geography to change daily experiences, decisions and behaviors. The goal of interventions should be to address the emotional, recreational, academic, mental and physical health and vocational needs of

youth and their families living in the targeted neighborhood or community.

To develop into productive, contributing members of society, young people need to be viewed as valued members of that society. Consequently, Federal, State and local governments, as well as youth-serving organizations, businesses and foundations, will have to make some fundamental shifts in the way that they view adolescents and address their needs.

Several actions can be taken to support American youth and prevent their involvement in violence. Among these actions are the recommendations of the other subgroups, particularly the subgroups on media violence, schools and firearms. Other steps include:

1. Establish a National Youth Policy.

The United States does not have a national youth policy. Youth issues are addressed on a "program by program" basis and many youth programs view youth as problems rather than people with talents and assets to be developed. The lack of a coherent policy that addresses the needs of adolescents in a comprehensive fashion has resulted in ineffective youth programs and policies.

If youth programs are to be effective, a comprehensive youth development policy must be developed. Such a policy should view all young people as resources to be developed and encourage communities to take responsibility for their youth by building on the inherent strengths of each young person. The policy should be designed to help youth build the skills and develop the healthy attitudes they will need to become productive and caring adults. It should recognize that all youth need the support of parents, communities and schools, and that youth functioning in high-risk environments need additional support. Additionally, a national youth policy should challenge all youth to take responsibility for their actions and the actions of their peers and to serve their communities.

First, the Federal Government should work with State and local governments and the private sector to bring national attention to adolescence as a critical time in children's development and to the need for a coherent youth policy based on the principles outlined earlier in this paper. Second, the Federal Government should facilitate the development of youth development initiatives at the Federal, State and local level — including the public and the private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors — that emphasize prevention rather than reaction and crisis response.

To support these efforts, the Federal Government can reallocate existing funds to programs that focus on prevention and on

meeting the developmental needs of youth in a comprehensive manner. It should also ensure that a significant portion of the resources for adolescents are targeted toward communities where youth are at highest risk.

2. Promote Youth Employment Opportunities.

Federal funds should be directed at providing support for a new youth community employment initiative to increase both short-term and long-term opportunities for youth and the employment rate for young adults in distressed communities. These new federal initiatives in high-poverty areas could include new funding for comprehensive youth employment development efforts such as school-to-work transitions, entrepreneurial businesses, community work improvement projects, sports and recreation programs, cultural activities, and other employment and training programs for youth and youth adults. These employment opportunities should provide young people with meaningful work experience and be fun.

3. Foster school reforms that are responsive to the changing needs of youth. Keep schools open after regular hours and on weekends, and offer programs for youth and their families.

Developing youth as resources for their communities while preventing them from engaging in violent behavior is contingent upon school reform. The challenge is to provide youth with the skills they need to function in society and simultaneously restructure schools so that they value youth and provide them with a safe and supportive learning environment. Reforms proposed by this Administration, such as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Educate America: Goals 2000, the Safe Schools Act, and the School to Work Transition, are a starting place.

In addition, communities need to take steps to convert schools and other community centers into places where youth can gather for safe and enjoyable activities and obtain services — such as health screenings and job counseling — during the hours when they are neither in school or at work. Youth spend an enormous amount of time out of school, and that time should be spent in an environment free of violence, alcohol and other drugs, and other impediments to a positive life style. Programs like the Beacon Schools in New York City and the Safe Haven Program in Trenton, New Jersey are excellent examples of programs that locate health and social services in schools to reach youth attending after-school activities and their families.

The enhanced Social Service Block Grant funds provided by the Federal Community Enterprise Initiative could provide support for efforts to transform schools into community centers. More funds may be available through the "Community Schools Youth Services

and Supervision" program included in the Senate version of the crime bill.

4. Build youth into the design of youth programs.

Every community has resources. Youth and their families are potential resources in community efforts to eradicate crime and violence and provide meaningful activities for young people. Not all communities utilize the resources available to them, and too often youth are ignored or viewed as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

The Federal Government should invest in the talents and capacities of youth by catalyzing public and private sector initiatives that build in high expectations, valuable roles and clear responsibilities for young people in the design and implementation, and where appropriate, delivery of youth programs. These programs should teach practical skills that young people can use to help others, themselves and their communities. Examples of such activities are peer counseling and mediation programs, in which youth resolve disputes among their peers and teach non-violent problem-solving techniques.

Federal, State and local governments can support youth-driven activities by providing applicants competing for youth program funds with additional "points" for plans to involve youth in program design, implementation or service delivery.

5. Involve youth, their families, and community stakeholders in community redevelopment efforts.

In highly distressed communities, the new Federal Community Enterprise Initiative could provide the catalyst for community redevelopment efforts. These efforts can include skills training, transportation services; job, housing and business counseling; and training and employment for disadvantaged youth and adults in construction, rehabilitation or improvement of affordable housing, public infrastructure, and community facilities. The Community Enterprise Initiative funds can also be used to support drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs and programs to provide activities outside of school hours. All community redevelopment efforts should involve youth, their families, service providers, private and public agencies, and other community leaders in their design and implementation.

In addition to targeting its resources to the empowerment zones and enterprise communities designated by the Community Enterprise Initiative, the Department of Health and Human Services can work to improve opportunities for youth in low-income neighborhoods by coordinating its youth-serving programs in local communities with other multi-site initiatives such as DOL's new Youth Fair Chance program, DOJ's Weed and Seed program and HUD's Family Investment

Centers.

6. Challenge local communities to provide one million mentors for young people.

The Federal government should challenge local business and voluntary organizations to expand efforts to pair young people with adult role models. There are currently about 150,000 to 200,000 mentors around the country sponsored by organizations such as the Big Brothers and Big Sisters and smaller groups. There many more young people who could benefit from positive relationships with adults. This Administration should call on communities around the nation to put one million mentors to work with our nation's youth.

This effort would be a partnership between the government and communities. While mentors would be recruited, screened, trained, supervised, monitored, supported and provided with logistical assistance by businesses and community-based organizations, the Federal Government can provide support through grants from the mentoring program of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the Justice Department. Another source of support for these efforts is the provision in the Senate-passed crime bill that authorizes an Ounce of Prevention Council.

In addition to supporting the development of mentoring programs, Federal, State, local governments and private organizations should review and modify their personnel policies to encourage employees to serve as community volunteers with youth. Personnel policies could be modified to permit employees to volunteer several hours per week in youth-serving organizations and activities including schools. Employees could also be encouraged to visit and participate in activities sponsored by schools and day care facilities.

7. Establish a Federal interagency mechanism to coordinate the delivery of youth services and programs and promote comprehensive youth programs.

The design and development of effective youth development programs requires the coordination of many disparate programs and funding streams. Addressing the needs of youth means tying together programs from federal agencies such as Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Labor, Justice and the Corporation for National and Community Service (which now includes ACTION). A formal mechanism is needed to facilitate the coordination of existing federal youth programs and promote an integrated, comprehensive and preventive approach to serving youth. The Ounce of Prevention Council, which is authorized in the Senate-passed version of the crime bill to bring these agencies together to plan prevention programs, would be the logical choice for such a coordinating body.

8. Establish a system to collect and disseminate information on model youth programs and policies at Federal, state, and local levels.

There are numerous innovative and effective violence prevention and youth development programs operating in every part of the country. Unfortunately, very little is known about these programs. In order to avoid "reinventing the wheel," information about these programs must be collected and disseminated to communities throughout the country. An example of the information that should be widely shared is an evaluation, recently launched by the Centers for Disease Control, of several programs designed to reduce interpersonal violence among high-risk youth. A potential starting point for developing such a system is the Department of Justice's current effort to link federal clearinghouses and databases to provide useful and easily accessible information to local communities.

9. Invest in well-planned, rigorous and longitudinal evaluations of intervention programs.

Currently, there is a great deal of research conducted on individual problems faced by youth, such as child abuse, suicide, alcohol and other drug use. Information on these issues is also collected, analyzed and disseminated on an individual, problem-by-problem basis. There is little research or data that describes the environments in which youth and their families live and the stress produced by living in deteriorating environments with few employment or safe recreation options. In order to serve youth most effectively, the research should begin to describe the context of youth behavior — including peer groups, families and community settings — rather than focusing exclusively on individual behaviors. It should also address a broad spectrum of areas associated with building healthy communities, such as economic opportunity, safety, recreational opportunities, health, and education.

IV. Research Agenda

The first principle of a youth development research agenda should be to move away from the "deficit model" that focuses on discrete problem behaviors, such as teen pregnancy, to a more comprehensive approach that describes experiences of youth in high risk situations who engage in negative behaviors. Research must describe youth in the context of peer group, family, neighborhood and community rather than individual behavior alone. Furthermore, we need to understand the adaptive and protective behaviors of youth in high stress environments and pay greater attention to positive developmental outcomes.

A research framework which considers the full contexts of youth development would:

- Identify the developmental needs of youth in general and within the context of distressed environments.
- Require attention to the interaction of risk factors and protective factors;
- Support studies that identify what needs are being met and which are not so that programs can identify appropriate and evaluable goals for youth ;
- Support long-term, longitudinal studies which examine processes of individual development and change, as well as change in communities and institutions; and
- Specify the most effective combination of community supports and opportunities necessary for youth to develop the skills and strengths they will need to become productive adults.

When developing any effort which aims for results large enough to be meaningful to both the individual and the community, attention must be paid to the circumstances in which youth live and grow. Efforts should address a broad spectrum of areas associated with a healthy community and healthy human development (e.g., economic opportunity, safety, health, education); therefore, research must allow understanding of the developmental needs of adolescents in relation to the environment.

Such a model for inquiry would move beyond measuring individual actions and circumstances to include obtaining data that illustrate the importance of positive developmental outcomes among youth. Rather than using research activities to focus simply on individual problem behaviors and the categorical funding streams by which most current programs are supported, this model would focus on the interaction of risk factors and normal processes of human development, positive adaptation and resilience among youth. Examples of areas for future research include:

- Availability of recreational and educational activities and employment opportunities;
- Existence of family and community supports;
- Developmental needs served by gang participation and other high risk behaviors;
- Cultural and ethnic characteristics as well as intergenerational influences on gang participation and other

high risk behaviors;

- Patterns of drug use and violent delinquency among youth to determine whether they are part of a single syndrome or whether there are developmental stages; and
- Correlation between family variables (e.g., parental supervision and/or involvement) and high risk behaviors to determine whether there is a concurrent or predictive relationship.

To be most effective, intervention efforts should consist of significant long-term investments. To insure the development and testing of new, high quality, scientifically-based prevention strategies, funding partnerships between service agencies and research institutes are needed. Since there are few credible evaluations of demonstrated intervention models, major investment in well-planned, rigorous evaluations is needed.