

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Gil Kerlikowske**

Board Chairman  
Chief of Police,  
Seattle, WA

**Edward Flynn**

Chief of Police,  
Milwaukee, WI

**Gilbert Gallegos**

Former Chief of Police,  
Albuquerque, NM  
Former President,  
Fraternal Order of Police

**Janice Grieshaber**

Crime Survivor,  
Executive Director,  
The Jenna Foundation,  
Syracuse, NY

**Glenn Ivey**

State's Attorney,  
Prince George's County, MD

**David S. Kass**

President,

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

**anford A. Newman, J.D.**

Founder



4,500 Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,  
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement  
Leaders, and Violence Survivors  
Preventing Crime and Violence

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

February 11, 2009  
Hearing

Youth Violence:  
Trends, Myths and Solutions

SENIOR STAFF

**President**

David S. Kass

**Chief Operating Officer**

Miriam A. Rollin, J.D.

**Vice Presidents**

Amy R. Dawson

Jeff Kirsch

STATE DIRECTORS

**California**

Barrie Becker  
510-836-2050

**Illinois**

Tim Carpenter  
312-986-9200

**Maine**

Kim Gore  
207-725-5946

**Michigan**

K.P. Pelleran  
517-371-3565

**New York**

Meredith Wiley, J.D.  
518-465-5462

**Ohio**

Cyndy Rees  
614-264-6662

**Oregon**

Martha Brooks  
503-649-2068

**Pennsylvania**

Bruce Clash  
717-233-1520

**Tennessee**

Mark Rogers  
615-662-4666

**Washington**

Laura Wells  
206-664-7110

Testimony by:  
Irving Bradley, Jr.

Police Director,  
Trenton, NJ

On Behalf of  
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Irving Bradley Jr. and I have been in law enforcement for 23 years and recently became Director of Police for Trenton, New Jersey. I previously served as Chief of Police for Newark. I am also a member of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS—a nationwide, bipartisan group of chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs, and victims of violence dedicated to examining the research on what brings kids into contact with the criminal justice system, and the most effective ways to direct them toward lives of safety, responsibility, and positive achievement.

There is no single solution to the problem of crime. The great challenge of policing is to identify the mix of proven prevention and enforcement strategies and tactics that work to make our communities safer. As first responders to emergencies 24/7, police officers see all the tragedies that occur on the streets and even in homes. From our experience, law enforcement leaders know that they need to target at-risk youth and the environment that produces them if they are to forge an effective crime reduction strategy.

My police department, like thousands across the country, has embraced community problem-solving as its service delivery model. This means that we try to deal with recurring problems proactively and in partnership with the community. To that end, we have created a program called *YouthStat*. *YouthStat* is a weekly process to examine criminally adjudicated youth offenders in the greater Trenton area. Working in collaboration with city, county, and state programs and agencies, participating members of *Youthstat* work to apply a mix of preventive programs and interventions for these youth. Taking a more holistic approach and assessing the needs of these youth on an individual basis has proved to be extremely successful. For example, Kamir (15 years of age), whose behavior had included minor criminal offenses and chronic truancy, has improved his behavior immensely and is now attending high school regularly – a remarkable change from his past. Delores (18 years of age), a victim of an unstable home environment, a chronic truant and adjudicated delinquent, has similarly improved her behavior substantially, successfully graduated from high school and is now employed full-time.

However, the overall picture of crime among young African Americans causes deep concern. Dr. Fox has pointed out that it is probably not a coincidence that an uptick in violence among African American youth is happening concurrently with a reduction in federal support for policing and youth violence prevention. And I'm convinced that restoring federal support for policing, while needed, will not be sufficient to get the job done. As a nation, we need to come to terms with the reality that we cannot arrest and imprison our way out of the crime problem. Fortunately, research has identified proven prevention and intervention approaches that help kids get a good start in life and redirect offending juveniles away from further crime. Federal leadership *must* leverage investments on the front-end that reach kids and their families *before* they make the life choices that put them at risk for offending.

One of our most powerful weapons against crime and violence is the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Each year, an estimated 2.7 million children in America are abused or neglected, including 900,000 cases that are actually investigated and verified by overburdened state child protection systems. Even though the majority of children who are abused or neglected are able to overcome their maltreatment and become productive adults, too many victims of abuse and neglect cannot. Not only are they more likely to abuse or neglect their own children, they are also more likely to become violent criminals. Child abuse and neglect increases the likelihood by 29 percent that an at-risk child will commit a violent crime when he or she grows up.

Fortunately, there are effective, pro-active measures we can take. Voluntary home visiting programs can help stop the cycle of abuse and neglect and later violence. These programs offer frequent, voluntary home visits by trained individuals to help new parents get the information, skills and support they need to raise healthy and safe kids. One program, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), has been shown to cut at-risk kids' child abuse and neglect *in half* and reduce their later arrests by about 60%. The benefits don't end there however – the Nurse-Family Partnership cuts mothers' arrests by 60%, as well. This program can save an average of five dollars for every dollar invested in it.

Quality early care and education programs such as Head Start are proven to prepare kids for school and keep them away from crime. My commitment to Head Start is not only professional, it is personal: when I was a young child, I attended Head Start. My own life experience is backed up by the research on quality early education. One model early childhood education program, the High/Scope Perry Preschool program, found that low-income, at-risk kids who did not attend the program were five times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than kids who were assigned to the preschool program. A study of a similar high-quality early care and education program, the Chicago Child-Parent Center, found that at-risk kids who attended quality preschool were less likely to abuse illegal drugs, be arrested, and do time behind bars.

With 60% of women and 90% of men with children under age 6 employed and an annual cost of \$16,000 a year for full-time care for two young children, struggling families can't afford this on their own.

Rigorous research also shows that high-quality early care and education generate long-term returns on investment that are unparalleled and that are essential to the long-term productivity of the nation. For example, the Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare, and other costs so much that it saved taxpayers more than \$16 for every \$1 invested. An analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis shows that the program's annual return on investment is 16% after adjusting for inflation. Thus, an initial investment of \$1,000 in a program like Perry Preschool is likely to return more than \$19,000 in 20 years.

There are also a number of proven-effective interventions that can be used with school-aged children to help them to avoid substance abuse, delinquency and violence. Young children experiencing serious and chronic behavior problems confront a higher risk of becoming involved in crime and violence as teens and adults. For example, an estimated 7% or more of preschoolers have levels of disruptive, aggressive behaviors severe enough to qualify for mental health diagnosis and approximately 60% of these children will later manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior. Therefore, treating behavioral and emotional problems while children are young is critical to preventing more serious later problems. The Incredible Years, a comprehensive program for young children with emotional and behavioral problems, has three components—aimed at parents, teachers, and children—to increase social and emotional competence and reduce juvenile antisocial behavior. A study of the approach found that when both the children and their parents receive help, 95 percent of the children experience significant reductions in problem behaviors.

Further, the Good Behavior Game is a classroom approach that is simple, can be used for young children or teenagers, and produces long-term results. Children or youth in classrooms are divided into two or more groups (with equal numbers of misbehaving children) and compete to behave well. Teachers make check marks for the children in each group who act out, and the winning group is given simple rewards such as getting to line up first for the playground. A long-term randomized study of Baltimore first-graders followed the children to age 19-21 and found a 50 percent lower dependence on drugs.

Another proven-effective, school-based approach is Life Skills Training. Life Skills Training is a three-year intervention designed to prevent or reduce gateway drug use. The program has been shown to cut tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use by 50 to 75 percent.

High-quality after-school programs that connect children to caring adults and provide constructive activities during the hours of 3:00pm to 6:00pm—the “prime time for juvenile crime” on school days—can also help in preventing crime. For example, a study compared five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity. If we don’t provide “latch-key kids” with structure, protection, and a sense of belonging, the local gangs will fill that gap – and once a kid’s drawn into a gang, it’s tough to get out.

Quality mentoring programs also help at-risk youth avoid criminal activity. A study of Big Brothers Big Sisters found that young people who were randomly assigned to a Big Brother or Big Sister mentor 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. My police department is so committed to mentoring that a number of our officers have all become mentors for local at-risk youth.

The widespread problem of bullying affects one out of every three American children in sixth through tenth grade and can lead to more serious consequences, including violent crime and death. Fortunately, an evidence-based, school-wide Bullying Prevention Program can produce a 20-50 percent reduction in bullying.

But is there anything proven to work once kids start committing offenses? Juveniles account for only 16% of all arrests, but they present the greatest opportunity for effective intervention responses that can help young offenders get back on track before the “prime crime ages”—18-22.

The most effective intervention programs for juvenile offenders utilize research-based approaches addressing the many factors relating to delinquent behavior and aim to change dangerous or delinquent behavior permanently. These programs often include mental health services for the youths and involve the parents in behavior modification strategies as well. For example: Functional Family Therapy cuts juvenile recidivism in half and saves the public an average of \$32,000 per youth treated. Multi-Systemic Therapy also cuts juvenile recidivism in half, and saves the public \$4.27 for every dollar invested. It doesn’t surprise me that such therapeutic approaches for delinquent youth can be so effective, since the incidence of learning disabilities and serious emotional disturbance among young offenders is high: studies of incarcerated youth reveal that as many as 70 percent suffer from disabling conditions.

The transition of juvenile offenders from confinement to “life on the outside” presents great risks and opportunities for young people and society. Each year, approximately 100,000 juveniles leave correction facilities. Unfortunately, many young people are released without access to critical services, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will return to crime. In addition, these young people are returning to households where families struggle with a variety of psychosocial and economic problems. I’ve had cases where young people have intentionally violated their parole or have done something to get put back in lock-up, stating that they “just can’t make it on the outside.” Fortunately, the likelihood that young people will successfully transition back into society after confinement improves markedly with comprehensive, research-based reentry efforts. Comprehensive reentry programs are especially effective among young people. With their brain development still in progress, young ex-offenders are more amenable to effective behavior modification interventions, thus saving lives, anguish, and public tax dollars.

Effective offender reentry efforts include programs like Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC). MTFC provides specially trained foster parents and ongoing supervision by a program case manager, as well as frequent contact and coordination of services with a youth's parole or probation officer, teachers, work supervisors and other involved adults during and after a youth's out of home placement. Compared to similar juveniles placed in non-secure group facilities, the MTFC approach cuts the average number of repeat arrests for seriously delinquent juveniles in half, and six times as many of the boys in MTFC as boys in a group home were not arrested again. MTFC is also cost-effective: it saves the public an average of over \$77,000 for every juvenile treated.

For the most dangerous young offenders, especially those who are involved in violent gangs, a combination of intensive police supervision, expedited sanctions for repeated violence, and expedited access to jobs, drug treatment or other services—a carrot-and-stick approach—has shown in a number of cities that it can cut homicides among violent offenders in high-crime neighborhoods. This approach is similar to the approach we are utilizing in Trenton with *Youthstat*. The carrot-and-stick approach has been successful in cities throughout the nation, including Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia. In Chicago, for example, this comprehensive, community-wide approach was tried in a group of west side Chicago neighborhoods with a long history of high levels of homicide, with another set of dangerous neighborhoods on the south side of serving as the control group. In the carrot-and-stick approach area there was a 37 percent drop in quarterly homicide rates when the project was implemented, while the decline in homicides in the other neighborhoods during the same period was 18 percent.

When we know so much that works to prevent kids from committing crime in the first place and to steer them away from crime once they have committed an offense, it's hard to understand why we, as a nation, don't fully utilize these approaches. Yet today, inadequate funding for these critical investments leaves millions of children at needless risk of becoming delinquent teens and adult criminals. For example:

- The Nurse Family Partnership home-visiting program is only able to serve about 20,000 of the half-million at-risk new mothers annually.
- Nationally, Head Start only serves about half of the poor three- and four-year-olds eligible for the pre-k program, while Early Head Start serves less than five percent of the eligible babies and toddlers.
- More than 14 million children still lack constructive adult supervision after school.
- FFT, and similar intervention programs for delinquent youth, remain so woefully underfunded that they reach only a fraction of the kids who could benefit from them.

Although some states and communities have begun to implement these proven approaches, federal leadership can greatly encourage their proliferation and expansion. That is why we are pleased to support Chairman Scott's Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act). This legislation will provide resources to communities to develop and implement plans, specific to the needs and strengths of the community, that utilize evidence-based prevention and intervention approaches like those I've discussed today. Law enforcement leaders' commitment to putting dangerous criminals in jail must be matched by Congress' commitment to keep kids from becoming criminals, and I commend Chairman Scott for his efforts.

Our nation must target much greater funding toward research-proven approaches that give kids the right start in life - that's the way those dollars can have the greatest impact. Kids in tough cities have tough decisions to make, and we have to provide them with alternatives to gangs, drugs, and life on the streets. I say this not only as someone on the enforcement side of the equation but also as someone who had to make some of the same hard choices that these youth are facing. Having been an at-risk kid who spent time in foster care, and someone who was a beneficiary of Head Start, a Boys Club recreation program, and mentoring by caring adults in my community, I am a living, breathing example of what these programs can help accomplish.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.