

## POLICE, YOUTH, AND CRIME PREVENTION: EXAMINING THE BEST PRACTICES<sup>1</sup>

### Polis, Gençlik ve Suç Önleme: En İyi Örnekler

Alida V. MERLO<sup>\*</sup>  
M. Alper SÖZER<sup>\*\*</sup>

#### Özet

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde polis gençlerle, genel olarak Anararıcı adalet, yön deęiřtirme ve suç önleme programları kapsamında çalışmaktadır. Kolluk kuvvetleri bu kapsamda çocuk istismarını önleme ve çocuk istismarı mağduru olma tehlikesi altındaki çocuklara yardım edebilme imkânına sahip olmaktadır. Bu makale, çocuk suçluluęu ve mağduriyetinin önelenmesinde polisin rolü ve bu eksende geliştirilmiş birçok başarılı stratejiyi incelemektedir. İlk önce gençlerin suç mağduru olma durumlarıyla ilgili bilgiler verilmiřtir, daha sonra en iyi uygulamalar ve bu uygulamalar üzerine yapılan bilimsel çalışmalar dört ana başlık altında incelenmiřtir. Sonuç olarak, farklı ülkelerde uygulanan başarılı önleme stratejilerinden uygun olanların karşılıklı olarak paylaşılp, geliştirilip, deęiřtirilip daha iyi hale getirilerek uygulanmasının suç önlemeye olumlu katkı yapacaęı önerilmiřtir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Polis, Suç önleme, Gençlik, En İyi Örnekler.

#### Abstract

Police officers frequently work with youth in diversion, restorative justice, and in delinquency prevention programs in the United States. The law enforcement community has the opportunity to possibly prevent abuse and to assist youth who may be in danger of victimization and its deleterious effects. This paper examines the role of the police in the prevention of youth crime and youth victimization and it reviews a number of successful strate-

<sup>1</sup> Paper presented and published at the International Symposium on Children at Risk and in Need of Protection (ISCRIP) in Ankara, Turkey on April 27, 2009.

<sup>\*</sup> Prof. Dr., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Department of Criminology, amerlo@iup.edu

<sup>\*\*</sup> Yrd. Doç. Dr., Polis Akademisi, asozer@egm.gov.tr

PBD, 12(4) 2009, ss.95-118

gies that have been developed. First, information about youth victimization was presented. Next, best practices and scientific evaluation on these strategies were discussed under for main titles. Finally, it was recommended that countries can share their approaches and expand, modify, or emulate those that are particularly appropriate. Acting this way will contribute to crime prevention.

**Key Words:** Police, Crime Prevention, Youth, Best Practices.

## **Introduction**

Although the United States is a highly industrialized and prosperous nation, it sometimes minimized the welfare of children and youth. For example, recent data indicate that 18 percent of youth from birth to 17 years of age live in poverty (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP] Statistical Briefing Book, 2009). Official reports concerning neglect and abuse document that approximately 1,500 children die every year from abuse and neglect. That is estimated to be four children each day of the year; and about 80 percent of these children are younger than four years of age (childhelp.org, 2009). There are also reports of child abuse and neglect that do not result in death; over 900,000 children are victimized by abuse and neglect each year (Lemmon and Verrecchia, 2009).

Child and youth victimization have long term consequences for children and for society. Children who are abused are 59 percent more likely to be arrested as juveniles; and there is evidence that the cycle of abuse repeats itself. About one-third of today's children who are the victims of child abuse and neglect will eventually abuse their own children (childhelp.org, 2009).

Cognizant of the relationship between child and adolescent victimization and future offending, this paper focuses on strategies in which criminal justice professionals and the community endeavor to prevent youth from becoming involved with the juvenile or criminal justice system. These partnerships can be effective. However, they require four components: A proactive approach, early intervention, collaboration among various agencies, and a comprehensive long-term commitment to youth (the PEICC model). Participants will also have to adhere to established program objectives, and be willing to depart from an over-reliance on the punitive sanctions that have characterized the response to juveniles in the United States for approximately twenty years.

## **1. Youth Victimization Studies**

Although the exact extent of youth victimization is unknown, researchers have utilized self report data to attempt to determine its pervasiveness. Stevens et al. (2005:219) sampled 3,907 adolescents. They found that one in 10 adolescents indicated that they had experienced a number of incidents of sexual or physical violence. Sometimes this physical violence occurred within the family structure and was described as “discipline” (Straus and Stewart, 1999). Similar patterns were reported by Finkelhor and Ormrod (2000). They analyzed FBI data from twelve states in 1997, and found that although family members were the most likely to victimize children under the age of 5, older youth were actually more likely to be victimized by adolescent peers. In brief, adolescents are victimized by both adult family members and peers in this stage of their lives (Finkelhor and Ormrod, 2000:8).

This more recent focus on adolescent victimization is significant. In analyzing data from the National Youth Survey, Menard (2002) found that adolescent violent victimization enhances the victim’s chances of being a violent offender or a victim of further abuse in adult life, increases the likelihood of becoming a property offender as an adult, and “doubles the odds of problem drug use in adulthood” (Menard, 2002:14). Similarly, Ireland et al. (2002) found that maltreatment only during adolescence, and continuing maltreatment in which a youth is victimized as a child and as an adolescent were related to delinquency and drug use (Merlo and Benekos, 2009). Among the youth in their sample, adolescents who were victimized by maltreatment were more likely to be arrested than those youth who had not been victimized (Ireland et al., 2002:387). In addition, Simons et al. (2004) contend that children who are exposed to corporal punishment are more likely to be delinquent in their adolescence.

Research on youth in juvenile detention further demonstrates the effects of trauma and victimization. Over 90 percent of youth (N=900) in an urban detention center in Illinois reported that they had experienced at least one trauma. Typically, these youth either had witnessed violence or had been threatened with a gun. In addition, more than 12 percent of these youth met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. These kinds of studies illustrate that victimization and trauma in childhood can have long term effects including delinquency (News-Medical.Net, 2004). These victimization data are accompanied by official reports on youth delinquent and criminal behavior.

Although the increase in violent youth crime that characterized the mid 1990s is no longer occurring, the issue of juveniles engaging in crime persists. With respect to youth involvement in delinquent or status offender behaviors, the police arrested approximately 1.4 million youth under the age of eighteen in 2007 (Uniform Crime Reports [UCR], 2008). These FBI data indicate that youth engage primarily in property offenses, but they also commit violent crime. For example, in 2007, there were 796 youth apprehended for murder in the United States (UCR, 2008).

However, there are also signs that the law enforcement community is approaching offenders who are also victims differently. One area is female juveniles engaged in prostitution. Not only are states like California and New York treating these girls as victims rather than offenders, but they are also providing police with more training to work with teenage victims. Simultaneously, more punitive sanctions are being imposed on the pimps. The police and prosecutors are taking a tougher stance and charging the girls' pimps with child trafficking (Hoag, 2009).

Before describing successful interventions, it is important to consider a couple of caveats. First, juvenile delinquency and violence prevention are not a "one size fits all" paradigm. There are strategies that may be relevant in neighborhoods or with youth that would not necessarily be effective throughout all neighborhoods or with all youth. Secondly, there is the issue of program delivery and monitoring. When a successful program is identified and a decision has been made to replicate it, research indicates that it is important to adhere to the program's established overall structure, technique, and delivery. It is essential that the program is consistently delivered with supervision and monitoring by trained and engaged staff members and supervisors, and that they ensure that its significant components are implemented (Fagan et al., 2008). Finally, it is important to engage the community at all levels to participate. As the relevant stakeholders, residents, criminal justice professionals, church leaders, schools, and youth have to be invested. Ultimately, the program's success depends on its constituents.

## **2. Reducing Child Abuse**

The OJJDP demonstrated its commitment to preventing child victimization when it established the Child Protection Division (Cullen, 2001:1). The Division initiated a collaborative strategy that included family assistance, program development in neighborhoods, improved services, court

reforms, and the creation of child advocacy teams which included law enforcement, court, social service, and medical professionals who worked together to investigate abuse and neglect and intervene in the lives of children and adolescent who were victimized (Cullen, 2001:6).

When the five sites that were part of the original study design were evaluated, Cronin et al. (2006:9) found that collaborative strategies and treatment among these agencies were effective and that these kinds of cooperative programs can be extended to other areas. For example, cross training programs that involved various agencies (law enforcement, child protection services, domestic violence staff) were successful; and they helped agencies to develop a more coordinated and consistent response to incidences of child abuse and domestic violence (Cronin et al., 2006:7). Furthermore, in at least three of the program locations, the families were securing services earlier in the process and the majority of the children were either returned to their parents or permanently placed within two years (Cronin et al., 2006:3). However, they also noted the importance of connecting the prevention education aspects of the program to the program's objectives (Cronin et al., 2006:9).

Another strategy to reduce child abuse is the *Childhaven* program. It provided services to abused, neglected or at-risk children from birth to 5 years of age. Parents and caregivers received weekly parental education, which included applied parenting instruction and parent-child interaction training. Parents also participated in a weekly support group. Children in the program received daily van transportation, food, medical supervision, health screenings and medical care. Families involved in the *Childhaven* project also agreed to have daily monitoring of their homes by the staff. In the evaluation of the study, Armsden and Gogerty (1998) found that children who did not participate in the *Childhaven* program were arrested at a younger age and had a higher arrest rate than the children who participated in the program.

### ***2.1. Law Enforcement Strategies***

Police play an important role in the prevention, intervention, and control of youth crime. As Lawrence (2007:104) has explained, police are not only the most “visible” officials in responding to youth but they are also instrumental in influencing youth perspectives and attitudes. Police are involved in both child protection and delinquency prevention, and these

dual roles illustrate the significance of police in complementing juvenile justice policy.

A recognized example of proactive policing with youth is the SHIELD Program which was developed in 1996 by the Westminster Police Department in Orange County, California (Wyrick, 2000). The program's objective is "to identify at-risk youth" and refer them to relevant community programs and resources (Wyrick, 2000:1). As police respond to routine calls (e.g., domestic violence), they encounter youth in home situations that expose them to negative influences of crime, drugs, and violence. Officers use these contacts to identify potential SHIELD youth who are then referred to the SHIELD Resource Officer (SRO). The SHIELD Officer then performs a risk assessment and determines whether referral is appropriate and which agencies or resources are most likely to have relevant services. The case management aspect of SHIELD ensures follow through and reassessment of the referral. In critiquing this police initiative, Wyrick (2000:6) concluded: "The critical supporting factor for the SHIELD program is not funding- it is the commitment and support of law enforcement administrators and personnel who are dedicated to preventing delinquency"

## ***2.2. School Resource Officers***

Schools are also an arena where police presence and roles have "changed and become more prevalent in recent years" (Lawrence, 2007:207). Police officers who are dispatched to work in schools are characterized as a "new species of public servant: a hybrid of educational, correctional, and law enforcement official" (Brown, 2006:593). In summarizing data from Law Enforcement Management and Administration Statistics (LEMAS), Brown (2006:591) reported that "more than a third of all sheriffs' offices and almost half of all local police departments have assigned sworn officers to serve in schools".

Police maintain order and enhance security; but they also have a variety of duties which include delinquency prevention through such programs as D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) and G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training). While the findings of these programs are mixed, these police initiatives are well-known, widely reported, and extensively implemented throughout schools in the U.S. (Lawrence, 2007:207).

In addition to the educational role of these programs, police also counsel students, present crime prevention information, advise officials on school security, investigate critical incidents, and serve as a liaison between schools and the juvenile justice system (Brown, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). Brown (2006:592) notes that in England, the school police officers are designated as School Liaison Officers (SLO) and are charged with school safety as well as with enhancing community-school relationships which focus on social services.

In South Korea, the school police initiative that was facilitated in Pusan by the Korean National Police Agency is known as “school guardians” or “school protectors” (Brown, 2006:593). In this model, former police officers as well as educators volunteer to provide safety, delinquency prevention, and a positive presence all of which demonstrate civic responsibility (Brown, 2006).

Another conceptualization of the police role in school initiatives is “school-based partnerships” (SBP) reported by Uchida et al., (2006). These programs were funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and incorporated the SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) to identify problems, develop responses, and evaluate results. Uchida et al. (2006:1) report that 275 law enforcement agencies were funded to partner with schools. In addition to reducing assaults, violence, school-related problems, and truancy, evaluations of some of the partnerships identified increased student, teacher, and parent involvement in prevention efforts, e.g., “peer mediation, teen court, and Crime Watch”.

In one partnership, Miami Police Department and Booker T. Washington Senior High School, Uchida et al. (2006:23) underscored the positive effect the program had on the “attitudes and lives of some officers”. While not all partnerships achieved the levels of success anticipated, “the most successful partnerships had clear roles among participants with strategic goals and shared priorities” (Uchida et al., 2006:31). School-based police initiatives offer the potential to control school crime, improve school safety, and develop effective partnerships.

There is, however, some concern that programs that emphasize “zero tolerance” approaches are less effective and counterproductive (Bazemore et al., 2004). Similarly, Lawrence (2007:39) questions whether the presence of school resource officers “criminalizes” school discipline. He notes that school policies have in effect criminalized some

student misconducts that are not a salient safety threat. Brown's (2006:591) review also notes the potential for this effect "because the officers are the new authoritative agents in the school environment". As police exert more formal social controls, school officials acquiesce disciplinary functions. Nonetheless, police-school partnerships that encompass more than security and control present encouraging opportunities to facilitate a safer learning environment, to reduce delinquency, and to improve community relations.

### ***2.3. School Violence and Victimization***

In their analysis, Snyder and Sickmund (2006) noted that a youth's risk of victimization is greater after school than during school hours. However, in a recent self-report study of youth in afterschool in Maryland, Soule et al., (2008:644) found that the incidence of simple assault was greater during school hours, but that more serious offenses occurred after school. These data suggest that the prevention of youth violence and victimization requires intervention both during the school day and afterschool.

Research on youth who bring weapons to school and perceptions of school safety illustrate the problem. According to the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, 5.9 percent of students in 2007 reported that they carried a weapon on school property; and 5.5 percent of students report that they do not attend school because they feel unsafe either in the school or on their commute to and from school (Center for the Study of Prevention of Violence Fact Sheet, 2008).

In attempting to determine which factors influence weapon carrying to school, Watkins utilized a national sample of approximately 10,000 students at 55 high schools. Based on his findings, Watkins (2008:402) suggested: "...school-wide interventions aimed at overcoming adverse environmental conditions in schools such as a culture of fear and trepidation could prove effective in reducing the likelihood of students bringing weapons to school".

Furthermore, Watkins found that a student's likelihood of carrying a weapon to school significantly increased if that student indicated that he/she was either a victim or a witness of a crime that involved a weapon in the preceding year (2008:399). He recognizes the value of having school staff (school resource officers and teachers) refer students to sup-



port services if they learn that a student has been the victim of weapons violence either in school or away from school.

Lowe et al. (2008:357) examined predictors of delinquency in a sample of 1,354 students in five public high schools and middle schools in a rural county. They found that youth who reported higher levels of victimization were more likely to participate in delinquent activity. The relationship between being victimized and engaging in delinquent activity in rural as well as urban areas suggests that greater attention should be directed toward youth victimization. Another partnership that has expanded the role of police in working with juveniles in the community is with probation officers.

### **3. Partnering Police and Probation Officers**

One of the successful projects involving police and probation officers is the Gang Violence Reduction Project which was established in Chicago. The project targeted gang violence in the most chronic high crime areas. This inter-organizational community project included crisis counseling, education, recreation activities, and job referrals for 200 youth gangs. The evaluations of the project showed that youth who participated in the project were less likely to engage in violence than youth in the control group (Spergel and Grossman, 1997).

Similarly, the well-known Boston Gun Project that was initiated in the 1990s was a partnership between law enforcement and juvenile probation (as well as with local and federal prosecutors and other community agencies) to suppress youth violence by targeting gangs and guns (Kennedy et al., 2001). The project, Operation Night Light, paired police and probation officers to conduct curfew checks and home visits for juvenile probationers. This strategy proved effective and other communities adopted the “Boston Strategy” model (Mertens, 2006). For example, in 1997, the OJJDP funded “Partnerships to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence” in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Oakland, California, and Syracuse, New York (Mertens, 2006). These collaborations included ride-along programs that facilitated information exchange and shared enforcement of probation conditions.

Modeling their program after one in San Diego, California, the Anchorage Police Department and the Anchorage Office of Juvenile Probation joined forces for a program called the Anchorage Coordinated

Agency Network (CAN) in 1999 (Giblin, 2002:118). The program had two goals: enhance the surveillance of juveniles on probation and provide youth with a positive role model (Giblin, 2002:117-118). The first goal was easily quantifiable: research indicated that youth in the CAN program had more technical violations than the control group who received traditional probation services (Giblin, 2002:134). By contrast, successful police officer/youth contacts and the quality of those meetings are not as easily discerned. Although these qualitative data are important to those who strive to establish partnerships, they are not typically considered in assessing a program's success.

In their evaluation of the San Bernardino, California, Operation Nightlight Program, Worrall and Gaines (2006:588) identified that in addition to enhanced supervision, information sharing and record keeping are also benefits of this approach to supervising and monitoring juvenile probationers. The IMPACT/Nightlight initiative was aimed at reducing juvenile crime, and data indicated evidence of crime reductions and "a possible general deterrent effect". In discussing this type of "intergovernmental partnership," Worrall and Gaines (2006:579-580) recognized that "collaboration is the current buzzword in criminal justice" and projects that pair police and juvenile probation officers have demonstrated problem-solving partnerships and the potential to reduce crime. They caution, however, that not all "partnerships are created equal" and some issues such as Fourth Amendment requirements and distortion of the probation service mission can be usurped because of "heightened supervision" of probationers.

Rather than rely on police and probation officers exclusively, a team approach which involves probation officers, mental health workers, police, alcohol and drug treatment staff, and restorative justice workers has also been utilized. In Ventura County, California, a four year probation project, the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP) was established to deal with youthful offenders (Lane et al., 2005). Youth between 12 to 18 years of age in Ventura County, California participated by random assignment in either traditional probation or the SOCP program. The youth in the traditional probation group received the same services all youth on regular probation have through the local court. By contrast, the SOCP youth experienced more contacts and services, and the community center where the counselors and staff worked was located in their neighborhood (Lane et al., 2005:15).

Although the results demonstrate few differences in terms of recidivism between the two groups, there were some important outcomes. First, the program demonstrated that representatives from a variety of agencies from law enforcement to recreation and mental health could work collaboratively in the community where the youth lived. Without this concentrated effort, it is unlikely that the youth would have received this level of services (Lane et al., 2005:46). Secondly, the approach illustrated that dealing with youth in a less harsh and punitive way does not exacerbate their delinquent involvement. Thirdly, although this research focused on recidivism outcomes, there are other outcomes which may not be quantified that are important such as improved staff morale and enhanced community relations. As Lane et al. (2005:47) suggest these kinds of “successes” can improve the quality of life for offenders and residents. In short, collaborative endeavors may offer unparalleled opportunities for justice professionals and the community to work together to deal with youth in programs that focus not only on reducing recidivism but also on improving school performance, community relations, and family interactions.

### ***3.1. Collaborations Targeting Runaways and Youth Who are Truant from School***

Another collaboration strategy that partners police with social service agencies has focused on the problem of juvenile runaways (Dedel, 2006). Essentially, this a “problem-solving” approach to provide help to youth in dealing with conditions at home that precipitate running away. In addition to the traditional police role of locating missing and runaway youth, police become involved in identifying parent-child conflicts and working with service providers to ensure that conflict resolution and/or counseling are provided. While police play a secondary role, their engagement in this problem solving approach is consistent with the principles of community oriented policing and reflect elements of the SHIELD Program such as risk assessment, referral, and collaboration with community agencies (Merlo and Benekos, 2007).

The Truancy Recovery Program in Richmond, California, is similar to the juvenile runaway programs in that police officers are the first to encounter truant youth, and they are the gatekeepers to the program (White et al., 2001). This police-school partnership is promoted as a delinquency prevention program since truancy is recognized as a risk factor. In their

evaluation, White et al. (2001) found that youth who completed the program had better subsequent attendance, reduced disciplinary incidents, and reduced delinquent activities.

In a study of a nonrandomized group of 756 youth brought to a truancy reduction center in Delaware, Garrison (2006:206) found that there was a progressive pattern of truancy beginning with youth between 10 and 11 years of age. These data suggest that truancy prevention programs should be developed for children beginning in the fifth grade. The transition from fifth to sixth grade and from middle school to high school is particularly stressful for children and youth. By initiating programs that involve teachers who work with the children during their first year of middle school and students in the higher grades who serve as mentors, truancy might be reduced (Garrison, 2006:211).

In their review of delinquency prevention interventions that target “child delinquents” (i.e., offenders that are younger than age 13), Loeber et al. (2003:11) identified programs that are “well-organized, integrated,” and “involve coordinated efforts” of police, court officials, and mental health services. As with the other police collaborations cited above, a problem-oriented policing model is applied to identifying young children who are at risk for delinquency. The responses demonstrate comprehensive strategies in which police are integral to prevention and intervention with child delinquents. Considering that there has been a 33 percent increase in the number of child delinquents handled by juvenile courts through the 1990s, (Snyder, 2001), these efforts are considered important in reducing the number of youth who become serious offenders (Loeber et al., 2003:13).

### ***3.2. Bullying Prevention Initiatives***

Bullying behavior in schools is different for boys and girls; and their motivation may be different. For example, boys are typically the aggressors and victims of direct bullying; and they bully other boys and girls. By contrast, girls are more apt to participate in or be affected by indirect bullying either as offenders or victims. Girls spread rumors about one another, but they can also engage in violence (Zahn et al., 2008:12).

One successful strategy to deal with bullying behavior in school, the “Steps to Respect” program, was evaluated by Frey et al. (2005). The program aimed to decrease school bullying problems for students in Grades 3-6 by teaching socio-emotional skills, promoting and fostering

socially responsible beliefs, and increasing staff-awareness. Results indicated that students in the program were less likely to accept bullying and aggressive behavior. Boys benefited more than girls from the program, and the program was more effective with older students (Frey et al., 2005).

Another successful program is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program which is designed for children in elementary, middle, and junior high schools (Blueprints Model Programs [BMP], 2006). This program is for all children; and it incorporates strategies that focus on the entire school, the classroom, and the individual for victims and youth engaged in bullying behaviors. Research demonstrates that it is successful in reducing bullying behaviors and in improving the overall social climate of the classroom (BMP, 2006).

Research by Green et al. (2008) also suggests that the schools can play an important role in reducing delinquency. Their longitudinal research began with 4,432 students in the 1989-1990 kindergarten class and ended with 2,078 students. They found that there is value in intervening with students who had poor reading ability and externalizing behaviors in the schools. These risk factors are correlated with school failure and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Green et al. (2008:339) contend that efforts to promote average reading skills and “effective interpersonal/cognitive problem solving skills are necessary if not sufficient to any meaningful efforts to reduce delinquency rates”.

#### **4. Mentoring Programs**

The most successful and extensive program in mentoring is Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. It has been in existence for almost 100 years, and it serves boys and girls from the age of 6 to 18 primarily targeting those from single parent households (Blueprints Model Fact Sheet [BMFC], 2006). At a cost of approximately \$1,000 per year per matched mentor/youth, this program has been proven to be effective. When compared to youth in a control group eighteen months after beginning the program, Big Brother/ Big Sister graduates are less likely to have initiated alcohol or other drug use, less likely to have assaulted another person, and more successful in terms of academic performance and attitude (BMFC, 2006).

Programs like Communities That Care (CTC) have been utilized to prevent youth from becoming involved in delinquency, substance abuse,

and violence (Hawkins and Catalano, 1992). Research indicates that children who reside in a high-risk environment can be prevented from behavior problems if they have a strong, warm relationship with a caring adult who is concerned about and committed to their successful development. That adult can be a teacher, a coach, a police officer, a representative from the youth's faith, or a neighbor (Lemmon and Verrecchia, 2009:148). However, the youth has to be committed to preserving that relationship; and he/she has to believe that it is valuable and worth preserving. According to Lemmon and Verrecchia (2009:148), "This investment is what motivates young people to abide by the healthy beliefs and clear standards held by these important adults in their lives".

Police have the opportunity to play a significant role in mentoring children and youth. The programs require a dedicated and mature adult who is concerned about the welfare of the child, willing to invest the time and energy in establishing a relationship with the child, and who demonstrates his/her long term commitment. Police officers who establish a good rapport in the community observe children and youth who could benefit from mentoring. They are uniquely poised to intervene in the lives of children and youth and to make a difference in their futures.

## **5. Restorative Justice Programs**

Restorative justice views delinquent and criminal conduct as affecting people rather than affecting the state. Victim-offender mediation, family-group conferences, balanced and restorative justice, and community justice all embody restorative justice principles (Cox et al., 2003:198). The goal is to emphasize treatment rather than punishment and to attempt to "make victims whole through interaction with and restitution by their offenders..." (Cox et al., 2003:13).

In the United States, a number of jurisdictions have instituted restorative justice principles or balanced and restorative justice models in their programs for youthful offenders (Bazemore, 2001). In the restorative justice model, the victim, community, and offender receive balanced attention and gain tangible benefits from their involvement with the justice system. The programs typically emulate those established in other countries. For example, the Wagga Wagga model which was first unveiled in New South Wales Australia in 1991, has been utilized to train police in 30 states (Winfrey 2004:194-195; McCold and Wachtel, 1998). In these programs, a police officer convenes a restorative justice confer-

ence or mediation session between the offender and the victim. McCold and Wachtel (1998) implemented a program in Pennsylvania that trained police officers to conduct family group conferences. Their findings indicate that victims, offenders, and families accepted this police-based restorative justice model, and that police can play an important role in conducting the conferences (McCold and Wachtel, 1998:6).

Restorative justice has also been developed by some schools in the United States as an alternative to exclusionary zero tolerance policies which typically necessitate school suspensions and expulsions (Stinchcomb et al., 2006). In utilizing restorative justice in schools, administrators endeavor to balance the interests of victims, offenders, school officials, and the community. Attempts to incorporate this strategy in Minnesota suggest that it can be an effective alternative to zero tolerance although it does not require abandoning that sanction. However, research on the restorative justice programs in Minnesota suggested that there were fewer incidences of school suspension and expulsion and fewer behavioral referrals, although there was no comparison or control group in the initial study (Stinchcomb et al., 2006:142). Such a strategy has the potential to reduce school violence and improve student relationships.

New Zealand created one of the more widely known restorative justice programs with the passage of the “1989 Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act” which included provisions for the Family Group Conference. The Family Group Conference occurs after the youth’s guilt has been established or the youth admits (or does not deny) his/her involvement in the alleged act. The conference is critical to the juvenile justice process, and sentencing for eligible youth cannot occur absent a conference (Winfree 2004:197). The police officer, specifically a youth aid officer (YAO), is an integral part of the conference. It is the YAO who recommends a case for a Family Group Conference (FGC) (Winfree, 2004:197). It is estimated that there are approximately 7,000 FGCs convened each year in New Zealand (Bradley et al., 2006:88).

Similarly, the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) was enacted in Canada in 2002. This legislation encourages and expands greater use of restorative justice for first time and non-violent offenders. Whether through a police or crown prosecutor, youth can be referred to community conferences (Smandych, 2006:28).

Police in Northern Ireland utilized the restorative justice approach to divert youthful offenders through a police-led victim offender conference.

Police-led victim offender conferencing emphasized the idea that it is not the young offender who is bad, but rather the act that he or she committed was bad. The program had significant advantages over the traditional cautioning practice and embodied some of the values of restorative justice (O'Mahony and Doak, 2004:484). However, O'Mahony and Doak (2004) also found two main drawbacks: the process led to a degree of net-widening, and there was relatively little actual victim participation.

In Europe, restorative justice principles are also increasingly incorporated into the juvenile justice process. For example, mediation and community service have been utilized far more extensively in recent years in Belgium (Put and Walgrave, 2006). In fact, Put and Walgrave (2006:124) contend that "There is no doubt that Flanders is currently one of the most restorative justice regions in Europe". These kinds of initiatives have been endorsed by the United Nations and the Council of Europe (Muncie and Goldson, 2006:210). However, there is concern that restorative justice policies can easily disintegrate into a public shaming of the offender, and that it can be used to focus on individual responsibility rather than a social justice paradigm for both indigenous and non-indigenous populations (Muncie and Goldson, 2006:210).

Police historically have tremendous discretion when dealing with youth. Through legislative initiatives, police are authorized to refer youth to restorative justice programs. In addition to referring youth, a number of programs illustrate that, in some instances, police are becoming more actively engaged in the restorative justice components of the justice system. This involvement is consistent with the role of the police officer as mediator, social worker, and counselor. Restorative justice policies might also encourage police to adopt a more community oriented policing perspective.

## **Conclusion**

These programs and policies demonstrate that there are successful interventions that can be utilized for children and youth. They require a slight shift in our focus. Rather than adopting a reactionary stance after children and youth engage in delinquent or pre-delinquent activity, we will have to become more proactive and attempt to intervene in the lives of children and families earlier (Benekos and Merlo, 2009). As indicated earlier, the PEICC model incorporates a Proactive approach, Early Intervention, Collaboration among agencies, and a Comprehensive policy. Its design is



inclusive, and its goal is laudable “make the lives of children throughout the world better”.

There is plenty of public support for these kinds of initiatives. For example, Moon et al. (2003:42) surveyed the public about various strategies in Tennessee. They found that approximately 80 percent of the respondents supported programs for at-risk children, even if such programs required their communities to increase taxes. Respondents also favored Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs; and they indicated that these programs were more effective than incarcerating youth, transferring their cases to adult court, or placing them on probation (Moon et al., 2003:42-43). Similarly, Applegate and Davis (2006) found a softening in public attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

In order to prevent youthful offending, greater collaboration among existing agencies is essential. The lessons of the 1990s have demonstrated that simply enacting harsh sanctions will not improve the welfare of the vast majority of children and youth. By contrast, a more holistic approach seems more tenable. It will require families, schools, parents, police, and the courts to recognize the importance of preventing child and youth victimization and endeavoring to improve the lives of all children. Strategies that include parenting programs, educational programs, and mental health services are successful and cost effective. As Burns et al. (2003) suggest, these initiatives prevent or reduce delinquent activity, improve educational achievement, decrease welfare costs, and enhance family relationships.

It would be somewhat short-sighted if the economic costs were not also addressed. Punitive and reactionary strategies are expensive. Incarcerating youth for long periods of time in juvenile or adult institutions has significant economic and social consequences. By contrast, interventions that focus on treatment and prevention are more economical and more humane. As Welsh et al. (2008:20) note, “...these non-punitive interventions need only produce a modest level of crime reduction to pay back program costs and produce a dividend for society”.

One other area critical to this discussion concerns data collection, data analyses, and the ability to monitor program performance. Unfortunately, in the U.S., juvenile justice programs neglect to assess and disseminate information on program performance with regard to the population served, intake, completion rates, and outcome (Jones and Wyant, 2007:768-769). As Jones and Wyant (2007:769) document in their review

of existing programs and the lack of substantive data to inform decisions, “The immediate challenge facing juvenile justice today is not new ideas and theories of what works-it is knowing when and for whom these ideas are being reasonably implemented, how they have operated, and what results they have produced”.

Earlier in this paper, the authors alluded to the “one size fits all” treatment approach that has characterized juvenile intervention programs in the United States. Unfortunately, the population that is being served is often overlooked when determining the programs to be offered. In particular, there has been an increasing body of literature that suggests that gender-specific programming and culturally-specific programming are more effective and that research on specific populations needs to be conducted and applied to future programs (Jones and Wyandt, 2007; Belenko and Logan, 2003, Dillon et al., 2008).

References to preventing the abuse and neglect of children and ensuring that there are programs available to assist them are included in Article 19 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In keeping with that Convention, all countries have a commitment to protect children, prevent their victimization, and ascertain that there are programs available to them (Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Finally, as President John F. Kennedy noted in his appeal for UNICEF on July 25, 1963, “Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future”. Are we ready to invest in that future?

## References

- Applegate, Brandon, K. and Davis, Rubin, K., (2006), “Public Views on Sentencing Juvenile Murderers: The Impact of Offender, Offense, and Perceived Maturity”, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, V.4, pp.55-74.
- Bazemore, Gordon, (2001), “Young People, Trouble, and Crime: Restorative justice as a Normative Theory of Informal Social Control and Social Support”, *Youth and Society*, V.33 I. 2, pp.199-226.
- Bazemore, Gordon; Stinchcomb, J. B. and Arthur, Leip, (2004), “Scared smart or bored straight: Testing deterrence logic in an evaluation of police-led truancy intervention”, *Justice Quarterly*, V.21, I.2, pp.269-299.

- Belenko, Steven and Logan, Theodore, K., (2003), "Delivering more effective treatment to adolescents: Improving the juvenile drug court model", *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, V. 25, pp.189-211.
- Benekos, Peter, J. and Merlo, Alida. V., (2009), *Controversies in Juvenile Justice and Delinquency*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Cincinnati, OH: Lexis/Nexis, Matthew Bender.
- Blueprints Model Programs Fact Sheet, (2006a), Big brothers big sisters of America. Boulder, Colorado: Institute of Behavioral Science. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/factsheets/cspv/FS-BPM02.pdf> (accessed on April 18, 2009).
- Blueprints Model Programs Fact Sheet, (2006b), Olweus bullying prevention program. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/factsheets/cspv/FS-BPM09.pdf> (accessed on April 18, 2009).
- Bradley, Trevor; Tauri, J. and Walters, R., (2006), "Demythologising youth justice in Aotearoa/New Zealand", in *Comparative youth justice*, J. Muncie and B. Goldson (Eds.), pp.79-95. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Brown, Benedict, (2006), "Understanding and assessing school police officers: A conceptual and methodological comment", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, V. 34, I.6, pp.591-604.
- Burns, Bruce, J.; Howell, John, C.; Wiig, J.K.; Augimeri, L.K.; Welsh, Brandon C.; Loeber, R. and Petechuck, D., (2003), *Treatment Services, and Intervention Programs for Child Delinquents*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, (2008), CSPV fact sheet, the youth violence problem. Boulder, Colorado: Institute of Behavioral Science. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/factsheets/cspv/FS-007/pdf> (accessed on April 18, 2009).
- Childhelp.org, (2009), National Child Abuse Statistics, [www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics](http://www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics). (accessed on April 15).
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, (1989), Article 19. [www.cirp.org/library/ethics/UN-convention](http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/UN-convention), (accessed on April 24, 2009).

- Cox, Steven; Conrad J. and Julie, Allen (2003), *Juvenile justice: A guide to theory and practice*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Cronin, Roberta; Frances Gragg; Danna, Schultz and Karla, Eisen, (2006), *Lessons Learned from Safe Kids/Safe Streets*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Cullen, Tom, (2001), *Keeping Children Safe: OJJDP's Child Protection Division*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Dedel, Kevin, (2006), *Juvenile Runaways*, U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Dillon, Franklin; R.; Pantin, H.; Robbins, Michael S. and Szapocznik, José, (2008), "Exploring the role of parental monitoring of peers on the relationship between family functioning and delinquency in the lives of African American and Hispanic adolescents", *Crime and Delinquency*, V.54, I.1, pp.65-94.
- Fagan, Albert A.; Hanson, Kronhauser; Hawkins, J.D. and Arthur, M. W., (2008), "Implementing effective community-based prevention programs in the community development study", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, V.6, pp.256-278.
- Finkelhor, Dorothy and Ormrod, Raspine, (2000), *Characteristics of Crimes against Juveniles*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Frey, Kelly, S.; Hirschstein, M.K.; Snell, J.L.; Van Schoiack-Edstrom, L.; MacKenzie, E.P. and Broderick, C.J., (2005), "Reducing playground bullying and supporting beliefs: An experimental trial of the *Steps to Respect* program", *Developmental Psychology*, V.2, I.3, pp.479-491.
- Garrison, Arthur H., (2006), "I missed the bus: School grade transition, the Wilmington school truancy center, and reasons youth don't go to school", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, V.4, I.1, pp.204-212.
- Giblin, Matthew J., (2002), "Using police officers to enhance the supervision of juvenile Probationers: An evaluation of the Anchorage CAN program", *Crime and Delinquency*, V. 48, I.1, pp.116-137.

- Green, Aracy; Gesten, Elizabeth L.; Greenwald, M. A. and Salcedo, O., (2008), "Predicting delinquency in adolescence and young adulthood: A longitudinal analysis of early risk factors", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, V. 6, I.4, pp.323-342.
- Hawkins, Jerry, D. and Catalano, Roberto, F., (1992), *Communities That Care: Action for Drug Abuse Prevention*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hoag, C., (2009), New laws treat teen prostitutes as abuse victims. wtop.com, <http://www.wtopnews.com/?nid=1048sid=1653324#>. Released on April 18, 2009. [Retrieved on April 21, 2009].
- Ireland, Tim, O; Smith, Craig, A. and Thornberry, T. P., (2002), "Developmental issues in the impact of child maltreatment on later delinquency and drug use", *Criminology*, V. 40, pp.359-400.
- Jones, Peter, R. and Wyant, B. R., (2007), "Target juvenile needs to reduce delinquency", *Criminology and Public Policy*, V. 6, I. 4, pp.763-772.
- Kennedy, David, M.; Anthony, A. Braga; A. M. Piehl, and E. J. Waring, (2001), *Reducing gun violence: The Boston gun project's operation ceasefire*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.
- Kennedy, John. F., (1963), UNICEF Appeal, [www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/) [Retrieved on April 24, 2009].
- Lane, Jamie; Turner, S; Fain, T. and Sehgal, A., (2005), "Evaluating an experimental intensive juvenile probation program: Supervision and official outcomes", *Crime and Delinquency*, V. 51, C. 1, pp.26-52.
- Lawrence, Robert, (2007), *School crime and juvenile justice*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Lemmon, J. H. and Verrecchia, P. J., (2009), "A world of risk: Victimized children in the juvenile justice system-an ecological explanation, a holistic solution", in P. Benekos and A. Merlo (Eds.), *Controversies in Juvenile Justice and Delinquency*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Cincinnati, OH: Lexis/Nexis. pp.131-171.

- Matthew, Bender; Loeber, Roethenberg, Dennis, P. Farrington and Petechuk, D., (2003), *Child delinquency: Early intervention and prevention*, U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Lowe, Nancy. C; May, D. C. and Elrod, P.; (2008), "Theoretical predictors of delinquency among public school students in a mid-southern state", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 6, (4), pp.343-362.
- McCold, Peter and B. Wachtel, (1998), "Restorative policing experiment: The Bethlehem Pennsylvania police family group conferencing project", [http://fp.enter.net/restorative practices/BPD.pdf](http://fp.enter.net/restorative_practices/BPD.pdf).
- Menard, Sacco, (2002), "Short-and long-term consequences of adolescent victimization", *Youth Violence and Research Bulletin*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Merlo, Alido. V. and Benekos, Peter.J., (2009), "Reflections on youth and juvenile justice", in P. Benekos and A. Merlo (Eds.), *Controversies in Juvenile Justice and Delinquency*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (pp.1-25), Cincinnati, OH: Lexis/Nexis, Matthew Bender.
- Merlo, Alido.V. and Benekos, Peter, J., (2007), "Juvenile justice policy: Emerging trends in the U.S.", Paper presented at the Second Istanbul Conference on *Domestic and Global Security* in İstanbul, Turkey on June 14, 2007.
- Mertens, Jeffrey, (2006), "Kids with guns: How agencies have made strides to get guns out of the hands of juveniles", *Law Enforcement Technology*, V. 33, I. 10, pp.14-20.
- Moore, E.; Armsden, G. and Gogerty, P. L., (1998), "A twelve-year follow-up study of maltreated and at-risk children who received early therapeutic child care", *Child Maltreatment*, 3 (1), 3-16.
- Muncie, John and B. Goldson, (2006), "States of transition: Convergence and diversity in International youth justice", in *Comparative youth justice*, Edited by J. Muncie and B. Goldson, pp.196-218, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- News-Medical.Net, (2004), "Trauma highly prevalent among delinquents", [http://www.new.medical.net /print\\_article.asp?id=323](http://www.new.medical.net /print_article.asp?id=323). Released on April 4, 2004, [Retrieved on April 21, 2009].

- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Statistical Briefing Book Online, (2009), Available: <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/population/qa01403.asp?qaDate=2007>. Released on September 12, 2008. [Retrieved on April 15, 2009].
- O'Mahony, D. and Doak, J., (2004), "Restorative justice: Is more better? The experience of police-led restorative cautioning pilots in Northern Ireland", *The Howard Journal*, V. 43, I. 5, pp.484-505.
- Put, Jordan and Lorry, Walgrave, (2006), "Belgium: From accountability towards accountability?", in *Comparative Youth Justice*, J. Muncie and B. Goldson (Eds.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. pp.111-126.
- Simons, Robert L; Simons, Leslie. G. and Wallace, L. E.; (2004), *Families, Delinquency and Crime*, Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.
- Soule, Dorothy; Gottfredson, Dennis and Bauer, E., (2008), "It's 3 p.m. Do you know where your child is: A study on the timing of juvenile victimization and delinquency", *Justice Quarterly*, V.25, I.4, pp.623-646.
- Spergel, Ionni, A. and Grossman, Smith, F., (1997), "The Little Village Project: A community approach to the gang problem", *Social Work*, 42, pp.456-70.
- Smandych, R., (2006), "Canada: Re-penalization and young offenders' rights", in *Comparative youth justice*, J. Muncie and B. Goldson (Eds.), pp.19-33, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Snyder, Hancock, N. and M. Sickmund, (2006), *Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national report*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Stevens, Timothy, N.; Ruggiero, K. J.; Kilpatrick, D.G.; Resnick, H.S. and Saunders, B. E., (2005), "Variables differentiating singly and multiply victimized youth: Results from the National survey of adolescents and implications for secondary prevention", *Child Maltreatment*, V.10, I.3, pp.211-223.
- Stinchcomb, Jacob, B.; Bazemore, G. and Riestenberg, N., (2006), "Beyond zero tolerance: Restoring justice in secondary schools", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 4, pp.123-147.

- Straus, Munice, A. and Stewart, J. H., (1999), "Corporal punishment by American parents: National data on prevalence, chronicity, severity, and duration, in the relation to child and family characteristics", *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, V. 2, pp.55-70.
- Uchida, Cathrine, D.; S. Solomon; C. M. Katz and C. E. Pappas, (2006), *School-based partnerships: A problem-solving strategy*, U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Uniform Crime Reports, (2008), *Crime in the United States 2007*, Available at [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/data/table\\_36.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/data/table_36.html) [Retrieved April 19, 2009].
- Watkins, A. M., (2008), Effects of community, school, and student factors on school-based weapon carrying, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 6 (4), pp.386-409.
- Welch, B.; Loeber, R.; Stevens, B.; Stouthamer-Loeber, M.; Cohen, M. and Farrington, D., (2008), "Costs of juvenile crime in urban areas", *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 6 (1), pp.3-27.
- White, M. D.; J. J. Fyfe; S. P. Campbell, and J. S. Goldkamp, (2001), "The school-police partnership: Identifying at-risk youth through a truant recovery program", *Evaluation Review*, V. 25, I. 5, pp.507-532.
- Winfree, L. T., (2004), "New Zealand police and restorative justice philosophy", *Crime and Delinquency*, V. 50, I. 2, pp.189-213.
- Worrall, John, L. and Larry, K. Gaines, (2006), "Effect of police-probation partnerships on juvenile arrests", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, V. 34, I. 6, pp.579-589.
- Wyrick, Phelan, A., (2000), *Law enforcement referral of at-risk youth: The SHIELD program*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Zahn, Murphy, A.; Brumbaugh, S.; Steffensmeier, D.; Feld, Bruce, C.; Morash, Merry., Chesney-Lind, M., Miller, J., Payne, A., Gottfredson, D. C. and Kruttschnitt, C., (2008), *Girls Study Group: Understanding and Responding to Girls' Delinquency*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.