

Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: Prevention

March 2015

Prevention

Diversion

Community-
Based
Alternatives

Community
Corrections
Facilities

Detention

Juvenile
Correctional
Facilities

Parole/
Probation

Reentry

Adult System

What is Prevention?

In the juvenile justice system, prevention refers to programs for youth *at-risk* of juvenile court involvement, but who have not come into contact with the juvenile court. Prevention is distinguished from intervention, which is programs delivered after a youth has had contact with the juvenile court system. However, some programs can be used successfully both as prevention and intervention programs. *Note:* Prevention programs can occur in a variety of systems and settings. However, if other systems are overwhelmed or underfunded, youth can be pushed into the juvenile justice system to receive programming. For example, youth with mental health and substance abuse needs who cannot access treatment in their communities may ultimately be referred to the juvenile justice system. Therefore, comprehensive community supports are critical to prevent youth's court involvement.

Research on Prevention:

Prevention programs vary widely in the population they serve, how services are delivered, and the age of youth served. Juvenile justice prevention is sometimes framed in terms of reducing a youth's risk factors for engaging in delinquent behavior and increasing a youth's protective factors or resiliency to avoid these behaviors. Examples of risk factors include exposure to violence/victimization, low involvement with or attachment to parents, association with delinquent peers, or transiency. Protective factors include connectedness to and positive engagement with family or adults, commitment to school and high grades, and involvement with social activities. Research has indicated that programs that address both risk and protective factors are more likely to be effective.

In recent years, much research has shown what programs work, leading the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create a Model Program Guide that summarizes these programs, such as:

- Nurse-family partnership: This program provides nurses to deliver care to low-income, first-time mothers at home through a child's second birthday. The nurse provides prenatal and postnatal services, including parenting and positive discipline skills and child development information. Nurses also help families plan for the future with family planning and links to education and employment opportunities. Studies have shown that youth in the program have higher academic achievement, are less likely to have a child maltreatment report filed, and are less likely to have used drugs. Cost: \$11,500 average for over two years.
- Positive Parenting Program (Triple P): Triple P is one of the most effective evidence-based parenting programs with over 30 years of research support. Triple P is for parents of children up to 12 years, with Teen Triple P for parents of 12-16 year olds. Triple P gives parents simple, practical strategies to confidently manage children's behavior, prevent problems developing and build strong, healthy relationships. Triple P is used in 25 countries and works across cultures, socio-economic groups and in all kinds of family structures.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Community-Based Mentoring (BBBS CBM): The BBBS CBM program matches adults to youth aged 6-18 with a high risk of exposure to violence and trauma. The mentoring relationships last for at least a year with pairs spending three to five hours together two to four times a month. Mentees who participated in the program were less likely to use drugs and alcohol and engage in assaultive behavior; they also had better prosocial relationships with parents and peers. Cost: \$1,000 average per match.
- Aggression Replacement Training (ART): ART helps youth with a history of serious antisocial and aggressive behavior to control anger and impulsivity, including recognizing triggers for aggression and learning high level moral reasoning. ART youth have a lower recidivism rate, higher social skills, and significant reductions in problem behavior. Cost: \$745 per youth.

Prevention in Ohio:

In Ohio, prevention programs are administered on a county-by-county basis, and currently there is not a database or centralized list available. However, there are several well-known programs throughout the state, including:

- **Summit County – Family Resource Center (FRC) and School Responder (Responder) Programs:** The FRC is a center based at the Summit County juvenile court that is funded by the state and county level of the Department of Job and Family Services. At the FRC, youth and families who are at-risk of court involvement work with a case manager to connect them with services available in the community to address their needs and help them avoid juvenile court contact. The FRC also functions as a diversion program in that youth can be referred from the court system. The Responder program works with the FRC by identifying and screening youth referred by schools who may have mental health or other behavioral challenges. Case managers in the FRC develop relationships with and take referrals from certain schools.
- **Montgomery County – Victory Project:** The Victory Project is an intensive program for high risk youth in the Dayton area. The Project serves 20 young men at a time who may or may not have been involved in the juvenile justice system and provides support in three main areas: 1) education, including tutoring and online school options if a youth is removed from their school, 2) entrepreneurship by employing youth in a lawn care company if they attend programming, and 3) enlightenment through faith-based programming and teaching life skills. The youth and staff have dinner together most evenings, creating a family-like environment based on love and accountability. Costs: About \$8,800/year for each youth.
- **Licking County – Our Futures:** Our Futures is a county-wide initiative that uses a variety of evidence-based strategies to increase positive behavior in youth and families, as well as addressing the culture within the county. The initiative started as a collaboration of the juvenile court and the Children and Families First Council to fund an array of programs, including the Good Behavior Game (a classroom management tool that has helped increase reading scores for low-income male youth among other outcomes), Triple P, and Pax-It notes (writing and displaying positive notes about youth in schools and other community settings).

Costs: Unfortunately, little information is collected on the costs of prevention programs in Ohio.

Outcomes and Recidivism: Youth who successfully engaged in Summit County’s responder program were less likely to be charged or adjudicated delinquent 12 months after being referred by the program. The majority of the youth referred to the responder program were White (56%) and male (68%), with an average age of 13.5.

Conclusion:

Prevention programs can help keep youth who are at-risk of juvenile justice system involvement and their families out of the courts and ensure that they receive services and programming to put them on a productive, positive path. In implementing prevention programs, courts should ensure that they are identifying youth who are at-risk for court involvement, examining the underlying risk factors putting those youth at-risk both individually and in communities, and tailoring programs to address particular risk factors while building youths’ protective factors.

However, prevention programs also should be supported by stakeholders outside the juvenile court system, including education, mental health and substance abuse agencies. Youth should not have to come into contact with the court system to receive services and juvenile court resources should be reserved for court-involved youth.

Resources:

Summit County Juvenile Court, *Family Resource Center*, <https://juvenilecourt.summitoh.net/index.php/home/family-resource-center> (last accessed December 15, 2014).

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Model Program Guide: Prevention*, available at <http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/> (2014).

Victory Project, *About Us*, http://www.victoryproject.org/#!about_us/crrl (last accessed December 15, 2014).

Our Futures In Licking County, <http://ourfutures.org/> (last accessed February 12, 2015).

This fact sheet is one of a fact sheet series about Ohio’s juvenile justice system by the Ohio Juvenile Justice Association.

If you have any questions, please visit [OJJA’s website] or contact Erin Davies with the Juvenile Justice Coalition at edavies@jjohio.org or 614-400-5548.