

Some Promising Approaches for Reducing Youth Violence*

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The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has evaluated a variety of approaches for reducing youth crime and has designated several programs as "blueprints" for success. This section provides information about several promising programs, including OJJDP's model programs. These programs are designed to teach youth who are chronic offenders how to make better decisions, build new skills, and develop positive relationships with adults and peers.

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) Oregon Social Learning Center

Program Description

MTFC is an alternative to group or residential treatment, incarceration, and hospitalization for adolescents who have problems with chronic antisocial behavior and delinquency. Individuals are recruited as foster parents, trained, and closely supervised as they provide 1-2 adolescents with MTFC treatment and intensive supervision at home, in school, and in the community. The program encourages clear and consistent limits with follow-through on consequences, positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, a healthy relationship with a mentoring adult, and separation from delinquent peers.

Population Served

MTFC serves teenagers with histories of chronic and severe criminal behavior who are at risk of incarceration. The program also has been applied successfully to youth with serious emotional disturbance.

Program Outcomes

Compared with delinquent youth in traditional group care, chronic offenders assigned to MTFC:

- Spent 60% fewer days incarcerated at 12-month follow-up
- Had significantly fewer subsequent arrests
- Ran away from their programs, on average, three times less often
- Engaged in significantly less hard drug use during the follow-up period; and
- Were moved more quickly from more restrictive settings (e.g., hospital, detention) to less restrictive community placements if detention was required

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Multisystemic Therapy (MST) Medical University of South Carolina

Program Description

MST is an intensive family- and community-based treatment that addresses the multiple determinants of serious antisocial behavior in juvenile offenders. The multisystemic approach views individuals as being nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass individual, family, and extrafamilial (peer, school, neighborhood) dimensions. Intervention may be necessary in any one or a combination of these systems.

Population Served

MST targets chronic, violent, or substance-abusing male and female juvenile offenders, ages 12 to 17, at high risk of out-of-home placement. The program also includes services for offenders' families.

Program Outcomes

MST has resulted in the following outcomes for serious juvenile offenders:

- 25-70% reduction in long-term rate of re-arrest
- 47-64% reduction in out-of-home placements
- Significant improvements in family functioning
- Decreased mental health problems

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*Information on model resources was obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The Midwestern Prevention Project (MPP)* The University of Southern California

Program Description

MPP is a comprehensive, community-based, multifaceted program for adolescent drug abuse prevention, involving an extended period of programming. MPP is initiated in a school setting, but also extends beyond this setting into the family and community contexts.

Population Served

Because early adolescence is the first risk period for gateway drug use (that is, the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and/or marijuana), MPP is initiated with entire grade levels of middle school (sixth or seventh grade) students. MPP then bridges the transitions from early adolescence through middle adolescence to late adolescence.

Program Outcomes

The following outcomes have been achieved with youth in MPP programs:

- Up to 40% reduction in daily smoking
- Up to 40% reduction in marijuana use, and smaller reductions in alcohol use maintained through grade 12
- Increased parent-child communications about drug use
- Positive effects on daily smoking, heavy marijuana use, and some hard drug use have been shown through early adulthood (age 23)

MPP also has been effective with community leaders, who have facilitated development of prevention programs, activities, and services.

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Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America (BBBSA)

Program Description

BBBSA has been providing adult support and friendship to youth for nearly a century. Through BBBSA's network of nearly 500 agencies across the country,

more than 70,000 youth are supervised in one-to-one relationships with mentoring adults.

Population Served

BBBSA serves youth aged 6 to 18 years who live in single-parent homes.

Program Outcomes

An evaluation of the BBBSA program was conducted to assess children who participated in BBBSA compared to their non-participating peers. After an 18 month period, BBBSA youth were:

- 46% less likely to initiate drug use
- 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use
- Almost one-third less likely to hit someone
- Superior in academic behavior, attitudes, and performance
- More likely to have high quality relationships with their parents or guardians
- More likely to have high quality relationships with their peers

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The Functional Family Therapy Program (FFT) University of Utah

Program Description

FFT is an outcome-driven prevention/intervention program for youth who have demonstrated the entire range of maladaptive, acting out behaviors and related syndromes.

Population Served

FFT serves youth aged 11-18 who are at risk for and/or presenting with delinquency, violence, substance use, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or disruptive behavior disorder.

Program Outcomes

Evaluations of FFT have demonstrated that the program:

- Effectively treats adolescents with conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, disruptive behavior disorder, alcohol and other drug abuse disorders, as well as those who are delinquent and/or violent
- Reduces the likelihood that these adolescents will require more restrictive, higher cost services
- Prevents further incidence of the presenting problem
- Prevents younger children in the family from requiring similar care
- Prevents adolescents from entering the adult criminal system

*This program will not be widely commercially available until Fall 2001.

- Effectively transfers treatment effects across treatment systems

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The Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America

Program Description

QOP is a youth development program designed to serve disadvantaged adolescents over a four-year period by providing education, service, and development activities, as well as financial incentives, from ninth grade through high school graduation.

Population Served

QOP serves adolescents from families receiving public assistance.

Program Outcomes

An evaluation which compared QOP participants to a control group demonstrated that:

- 63% of QOP members graduated from high school, compared to 42% of the control group
- 42% of QOP members attended post-secondary schools, compared to 16% of the control group
- 23% of QOP members dropped out of high school, compared to 50% of the control group
- 34% of QOP members received an honor or award in the past year, compared to 12% of the control group
- 24% of QOP members became teen parents, compared to 38% of the control group
- 19% of QOP members were arrested, compared to 23% of the control group

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Life Skills Training (LST) Institute for Prevention Research, Cornell University Medical College

Program Description

LST provides training in a variety of life skills including; personal self-management, social skills, and drug-related resistance skills. Initial intervention occurs in grade 6 or 7, depending on the school structure, with booster sessions in the two subsequent years.

Population Served

LST serves entire grade levels of middle/junior high school students.

Program Outcomes

The results of more than a dozen studies consistently show that the LST training program dramatically reduces tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use. These studies further show that the program works with a diverse range of adolescents, produces results that are long-lasting, and is effective when taught by teachers, peer leaders, or health professionals. Using six-year post-treatment outcomes averaged across all of these studies, LST has been found to:

- Cut tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use 50%-75%
- Cut poly-drug use up to 66%
- Reduce pack-a-day smoking by 25%
- Decrease use of inhalants, narcotics, and hallucinogens

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The Bullying Prevention Program (BPP) University of Bergen (Norway)

Program Description

BPP is a school-based intervention for the reduction and prevention of bully/victim problems.

Population Served

BPP serves students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools. All students within a school participate in most aspects of the program. Additional individual interventions are targeted at students who are identified as bullies or victims of bullying.

Program Outcomes

BPP has been shown to result in:

- Substantial reduction in boys' and girls' reports of bullying and victimization
- Significant reduction in students' reports of general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy

- Significant improvements in the “social climate” of the class, as reflected in students’ reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and school

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The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Program Pennsylvania State University

Program Description

PATHS is a comprehensive program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in elementary school-aged children while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. This innovative curriculum is designed for use by educators and counselors in a multi-year, universal prevention model. Although primarily focused on the school and classroom settings, information and activities also are available to parents.

Population Served

PATHS was developed for use in the classroom setting with all elementary school aged-children. PATHS has been field-tested and researched with children in regular education classroom settings, as well as with a variety of special needs students (deaf, hearing-impaired, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, mildly mentally delayed, and gifted). Ideally it should be initiated at school entry and continue through Grade 5.

Program Outcomes

PATHS has resulted in:

- Improved self-control
- Improved understanding and recognition of emotions
- Increased ability to tolerate frustration
- Use of more effective conflict-resolution strategies
- Improved thinking and planning skills
- Decreased anxiety/depressive symptoms for special needs students
- Decreased symptoms of sadness and depression for special needs students
- Decreased self-reports of conduct problems, including aggression

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Mayor’s Anti-Gang Office and Gang Task Force Houston, TX

Program Description

The program’s goal is to reduce juvenile and gang-related crime and violence through partnerships with law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, schools, and youth service providers.

Population Served

The Mayor’s Anti-Gang Office and Task Force serves criminal street gangs and at-risk juveniles.

Program Outcomes

Following implementation of the Mayor’s program, Houston showed the following one-year improvements in juvenile crime statistics for 1997:

- 11.6% decline in overall violent crime
- 23.1% decline in juveniles accused of murder
- 10% decline in robbery convictions
- 5.7% decline in rape convictions
- 14.2% decline in aggravated assault convictions

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