

# Executive Summary

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Every day in Michigan, 55 juveniles ages 10-17 are arrested for an index crime, 9 for a violent index crime; 10 children are placed in out-of-home care for delinquency; and 157 youth drop out of high school. As these facts suggest, Michigan—like other states—has not yet eradicated the problem of youth violence. This Michigan Family Impact Seminar Briefing Report addresses this important problem by describing a framework for understanding it, offering a variety of policy options, and describing a methodology for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of different policy approaches.

The first article, *Youth Violence in Michigan*, provides statistics regarding the problem of youth violence in Michigan, including information on youth under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Corrections. It also outlines the state's current juvenile justice policies and explains how youth placement decisions are made in Michigan.

*A Framework for Understanding Youth Violence* discusses the scope of the problem nationally and distinguishes myths from realities. It describes patterns and categories of juvenile crime and defines the problem of chronic delinquency. The article then discusses factors that predict youth violence, organized in six categories: Individual, family, school, peer, community and neighborhood, and media. The article also outlines factors for policymakers to consider when evaluating proposed approaches. These include program promise, efficacy, feasibility, safety, cost/benefit, and sustainability. Next, the article describes the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) comprehensive strategy for juvenile offenders, a strategy that features the concept of "balanced and restorative justice." The article concludes with a listing of policy options for each of the six categories of predictors of youth violence.

In *Cost-Effective Violence Prevention Programs: A Guide to Current Knowledge and How to Use It*, Dr. Peter Greenwood outlines criteria for judging program effectiveness and distinguishes the characteristics of strategies that work from those that don't. He then provides the RAND Corporation's method for evaluating policy alternatives, including estimating the direct costs and benefits of those strategies, and provides a case example as illustration. The article concludes that some early-intervention approaches appear to be more cost effective than widely endorsed incarceration alternatives: graduation incentives, parent training approaches, and delinquent supervision programs.

Next, Dr. Patricia Chamberlain describes *Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Chronic Juvenile Offenders: A Blueprint for Violence Prevention*. MTFC is a developmentally appropriate, gender-specific, ecologically-sound foster care approach to treatment of serious, chronic delinquents. Dr. Chamberlain describes the program for boys and its recent adaptation for girls, and contrasts the effectiveness of MTFC with traditional community-based group care facilities. MTFC resulted in better short- and long-term impacts on changing antisocial behavior. Teens in MTFC completed their programs more often, had fewer criminal referrals, and reported engaging in fewer violent and serious crimes than teens in traditional group care.

*Some Promising Approaches for Reducing Youth Violence* briefly describes violence prevention programs designated as "blueprints" by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

*Additional Resources* provides links to websites and information sources relevant to the problem of youth violence and programs that address the problem.