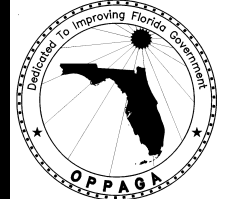




Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



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Policy Review of Prevention Programs of the Department of Juvenile Justice

Report Abstract

- Most of the resources in the Department of Juvenile Justice prevention budget are not directed toward high-risk youth to deter them from entering the delinquency system.
- The Department does not measure long-term outcomes of most of its prevention programs and therefore often cannot evaluate program effectiveness or use this information to make allocation decisions.

Purpose of Review

The Joint Legislative Auditing Committee directed us to examine how the Department of Juvenile Justice identifies youth for prevention programs and how these programs are selected and evaluated.

Background

As concern over public safety and juvenile crime has grown, funding for juvenile incarceration, called residential commitment, has increased. From fiscal year 1992-93 to fiscal year 1996-97, legislative appropriations for residential commitment nearly tripled, growing from \$60.7 million to \$150.7 million.

To reduce the number of delinquent youth the Legislature and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) have begun directing more attention to prevention programs. As described in Ch. 39, F.S., prevention programs are intended to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system. These programs are voluntary for youth participating in them.

Youth in some prevention programs receive individual, group and family counseling, while in other programs youth can receive recreational, vocational, or educational services. The Department has also implemented intervention programs, which are intended to serve youth who have already engaged in delinquent behavior.

Prevention programs are receiving more attention for two reasons. First, according to juvenile justice research, dollars spent on prevention are more cost-effective than dollars spent on residential commitment. Second, the number of 15 to 17 year-old youth in Florida will increase by 42% over the next 15 years. This anticipated increase in the number of youth who are at the age when delinquency most frequently occurs is likely to result in more acts of delinquency and increased expenditures for residential commitment. However, investing in effective prevention programs could protect the public from juvenile crime and save the state money.

The Department's total budget for fiscal year 1996-97 is \$454.4 million; DJJ has identified \$40.2 million as funding prevention programs. These funds are allocated through program contracts, grants to local community programs, and other appropriations to local community programs.

**Exhibit 1
Department of Juvenile Justice Prevention Budget for Fiscal Year 1996-97**

Program	Amount	Funding Source
<i>CONTRACTS</i>		
CINS/FINS Program (Florida Network) ¹	\$23,372,147	General Revenue
PACE Centers for Girls ²	4,059,270	General Revenue
<i>GRANTS</i>		
Local Prevention/Diversion Initiatives	2,033,500	General Revenue
High Crime Neighborhood Mentoring Program	372,278	General Revenue
Community Partnership Grants Program	5,100,000	Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund
Federal OJJDP Grant Funding ³	3,063,507	Federal Formula Grants
<i>OTHER APPROPRIATIONS</i>		
Intensive Learning Alternatives Program	837,418	General Revenue
School Prevention Programs	169,580	General Revenue
Special Program for Status Offenders	783,858	General Revenue and Social Services Block Grant Trust Fund
Police in High-Risk Neighborhoods	100,000	General Revenue
In-Home Supervision (District 10)	383,000	General Revenue
TOTAL PREVENTION BUDGET	\$40,274,558	

¹CINS/FINS is the Children in Need of Services and Families in Need of Services Program.

²PACE is the Practical Academic and Cultural Education program for girls.

³OJJDP is the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within the U.S. Department of Justice.

Source: Department of Juvenile Justice.

Findings

Most of the Department's prevention resources are not directed toward high-risk youth to deter them from entering the delinquency system.

To slow the trend of increasing numbers of delinquent youth and reduce future commitment costs, prevention programs need to identify high-risk youth who are not already in the juvenile justice system. Several factors indicate which youth are likely to be at high risk of future delinquency and commitment to DJJ. For example, in fiscal year 1995-96, youth committed to DJJ were 86% male and 43% black male. These percentages are not proportionate to the general population of youth, and indicate black males are at a higher risk for delinquency, while females are at a lower risk of delinquency than other youth. (See Exhibit 2.) Because black males are at high risk, they should receive more attention from prevention programs.

Exhibit 2 Black Males Are Over-Represented in the Commitment Population

Youth 10-17 Years	Florida Population	Commitment Population
White Males	39.1%	42.8%
Black Males	11.0%	42.8%
Other Males	1.2%	0.7%
White Females	37.0%	6.9%
Black Females	10.6%	6.7%
Other Females	1.2%	0.1%

Source: Demographic Estimating Conference Database, updated June 1996
DJJ Bureau of Research and Data, (Commitment figures).

However, DJJ directs most of its prevention resources to programs that do not address high-risk youth. This occurs for three reasons:

- The Department classifies some programs as prevention even though these programs serve other purposes;
- The Department has not distinguished between prevention and intervention programs in its prevention budget; and
- The Department collects, but does not compile demographic characteristics of youth served by prevention programs so it cannot be sure that the programs reach high-risk youth.

Some prevention programs serve other purposes.

Historically, the Legislature has provided funding to programs serving youth who are runaways, truants, and ungovernable. Programs for these youth include the Children in Need of Services and Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS) Program and Practical Academic Cultural Education (PACE) Program. The CINS/FINS Program provides shelters for runaways, reunites runaways with their families, and works with youth and families to preserve the unity of families. The PACE Program works with troubled girls to prevent school drop outs, teen pregnancy, and welfare dependency.

The Department includes CINS/FINS and PACE programs in its continuum of prevention programs even though the programs serve a much broader array of needs than crime prevention and serve a different population of youth than delinquency programs. For example, in fiscal year 1994-95, 54% of the youth served by CINS/FINS programs were females and only 14% of youth were minority males. The PACE Program serves only females. While some of the youth in these programs may be at risk of delinquency, their demographic characteristics indicate that most of them are not at high risk of becoming involved in criminal activities and being committed to DJJ.

CINS/FINS and PACE Programs comprise \$27 million, or 68%, of the Department's prevention budget (see Exhibit 1). Their classification as prevention programs overstates the resources that go to programs that are primarily designed to prevent high-risk youth from engaging in delinquent acts.

The Department's prevention budget does not distinguish between prevention and intervention programs. In addition, many of the programs funded by the remaining resources in the Department's prevention budget serve youth who have already committed delinquent acts, although it is more cost-

effective to serve youth who have not yet entered the delinquency system. Several of the Department's prevention programs are actually intervention programs aimed at preventing youth who have already been charged with delinquent acts from committing future crimes. Because the Department does not differentiate between prevention and intervention in the prevention budget, it is difficult for the Legislature to develop an informed strategy that would serve the needs of both groups or to determine if prevention dollars are being used in the most cost-effective way.

Department prevention programs may not effectively focus on high-risk youth.

Furthermore, the Department collects, but does not compile demographic characteristics, such as age, race, and gender of youth that are served by prevention programs. As a result, the Department does not know whether these programs are effectively reaching high-risk youth.

One cost-effective and straightforward way for the Department to reach high-risk youth is to take advantage of information in the DJJ case management data system about siblings and neighborhoods of committed youth. Research indicates that youth with delinquent siblings or incarcerated parents are at very high risk of becoming delinquent. However, there are only a small number of programs that receive funding to provide prevention services to siblings of delinquent youth. Because the Department maintains a list in the computer system of siblings of each committed youth, it would not be difficult to identify siblings for prevention services. Similarly, Department staff could readily identify neighborhoods or zip codes with high numbers of committed youth and mark these neighborhoods for prevention grants.

In addition, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board is collaborating with the Department's Bureau of Research and Data to develop a methodology for identifying factors associated with youth who are likely to become delinquent. Using the national Communities That Care model, staff are gathering quantifiable data to identify factors that place pressures on youth at the community, school, family, and individual levels. These factors often serve as predictors of delinquency. Staff will then use these factors to identify what type of prevention programs should be created in each county.

Putting priority on youth who are most at risk of delinquency but have not yet entered the juvenile justice system will put prevention dollars where they are most needed and where they will be most cost-effective.

The Department does not measure long-term outcomes of most of its prevention programs and therefore often cannot evaluate program effectiveness or use this information to make allocation decisions.

The Department collects data needed to evaluate the long-term effects of its federal prevention grants. However, for most of its prevention programs, the Department monitors fiscal and administrative compliance, not long-term effects on the youth they serve. Consequently, the Department does not always know which of the programs it funds are effective in preventing high-risk juveniles from committing delinquent acts. Further, the Department cannot make informed decisions on the types of programs that can best prevent juvenile crime or how to best allocate funds to competing programs.

The Department monitors providers receiving grants for prevention programs for fiscal and administrative compliance. In addition, it requires providers to evaluate their own effectiveness and provide data on the effects of their programs. However, the required data is focused on outputs and interim outcomes rather than overall program effectiveness. For example, outputs include the number of participants served, number of youth successfully completing programs, and daily attendance. Interim outcomes include improvements in youth grade point averages or decreases in local juvenile crime rates. Department staff review this data which is used to assist juvenile justice boards and councils in making decisions to award new grants and to renew or discontinue previously awarded grants.

Although the data the Department receives from providers can be used to assess the short-term effects of prevention programs, they do not answer the fundamental question of whether youth who participate in these programs commit less crime. Currently, the Department collects data needed to evaluate the long-term effects of its federal prevention grants only, including whether participating youth become delinquent during or after the programs. However, the Department does not collect similar information for its

Community Partnership Grants and other prevention programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Currently, the Department's prevention budget overstates the amount of resources being directed toward high-risk youth to deter them from delinquency. We recommend that the Department better identify prevention resources by separating CIN/FINS Programs from the prevention budget and distinguishing between prevention and intervention programs within the prevention budget. The Department should then use information it routinely collects about the siblings and neighborhoods of youth presently in commitment, as well as the results of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board's Communities that Care Study, to direct prevention programs to high-risk youth. In addition, the Department should track characteristics of the youth served by prevention programs to ensure that these programs are serving high-risk youth.

The Department should also evaluate prevention programs for their long-term effectiveness. The Department is currently developing a new management information computer system. We recommend that the Department use this system to track program participants to determine if youth participating in prevention programs become delinquent.

Agency Response

The Assistant Secretary for Program Planning provided a written response to our draft report. He stated that the Department believes the youth served by the resources identified as prevention and early intervention, especially the CINS/FINS programs, are indeed youth at-risk of delinquency and agrees that more services are needed to be directed to minority populations. He also concurred with the need for evaluation of prevention and early intervention services.

This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report may be obtained by telephone (904/488-1023 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (904/487-3804), in person (Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St.), or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, P.O. Box 1735, Tallahassee, FL 32302). Web site: <http://www.state.fl.us/oppaga/>

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