

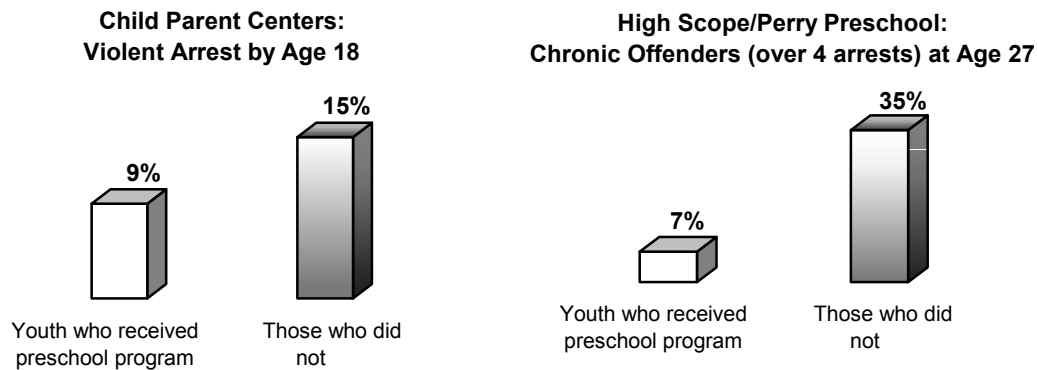
The Link between Early Childhood Education and Crime and Violence Reduction

High quality early learning and care is one of the most powerful weapons against crime, while poor early childhood education multiplies the risk that children will grow up to be a threat to every American family.

Quality Child Care Cuts Crime

Powerful evidence from one study after another proves that high quality care in the first years of life can greatly reduce the risk that today's babies and toddlers will become tomorrow's violent teens and adults.¹

New research on Chicago's government-funded Child-Parent Centers tracked 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in the program for 15 years.² Children who did not participate in the preschool program were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. This confirms similar results from the High/Scope Perry preschool program.³ A 22-year study of this program showed that leaving at-risk children out of this program multiplied by five times the risk that they would become chronic lawbreakers as adults.



Children from child care centers receiving assistance from North Carolina's Smart Start quality improvement program were half as likely as comparison children to rate poorly on behavior problems in kindergarten.⁴ This is important because research consistently shows that children who exhibit problem behaviors in the early grades are at far greater risk than other children of becoming teen delinquents and adult criminals.⁵

Large national studies show that at-risk kids who attended quality child care programs had no more behavior problems at age eight than did children of college-educated moms.⁶ But those at-risk kids who received poor quality care had significantly more problem behaviors.

Prevention Results in Cost Savings

Investments in early childhood education lead to large economic savings. The Child-Parent Center program has served 100,000 Chicago kids and will prevent an estimated 13,000 violent juvenile crimes. It is saving taxpayers, victims, and participants over \$7 for every \$1 invested, without counting pain and suffering from crimes. A study released by Vanderbilt University estimates that the potential benefits in saving a high-risk youth from becoming a typical career criminal are between \$1 and \$1.3 million.⁷

Law Enforcement is Supportive

Law enforcement is united in its support of early childhood education as a strategy for crime prevention. In a recent survey conducted by George Mason University, when police chiefs were asked to rate various strategies “on their value as a crime prevention tool,” high quality early learning and care was given the highest rating for effectiveness by three to ten times more chiefs than such alternatives as trying more juveniles as adults, building more juvenile detention facilities, or installing more metal detectors in schools.⁸ Nearly 9 out of 10 police chiefs said that America could greatly reduce crime by expanding quality child care programs.

¹ Numerous studies demonstrate the role of high quality child care in preventing problem behaviors at later ages in a child’s development. See for example: Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., et al., (1999). “The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School,” <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~NCEDL/PAGES/cq.htm>. Further research has shown that school-age children with problem behaviors are at higher risk to become criminals, for example: Ensminger, M.E., Kellam, S.G., Rubin, B.R. (1983). “School and Family Origins of Delinquency: Comparisons by Sex.” In K.T., Van Dusen & S.A. Mednick (Eds.), *Prospective Studies of Crime and Delinquency*, (pp. 730-97). Boston, MA: Kluwer-Nijhoff.; Tremblay, R.E., Kurtz, L., Masse, L. C., Vitaro, F., Pihl, R.O. “A Bimodal Intervention for Disruptive Kindergarten Boys; Its Impact Through Mid-adolescence. Unpublished manuscript. Montreal: University of Montreal, Research Unit on Children’s Psycho-Social Maladjustment, 1994; and Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A., Williams, K.R., *Violence in American Schools*, New York, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998. Two of the studies that tracked at-risk children in model pre-school programs into their crime-prone years found strong evidence that later crime and violence can be prevented by these early-childhood programs: Lally, J.R., Mangione, P.L., and Honig, A.S., “The Syracuse University Family development Research Program: Long-Range Impact of an Early Intervention with Low-Income Children and Their Families.” In D.R. Powell (Ed.), *Parent Education as Early Childhood Intervention: Emerging Directions in Theory, Research and Practice* (pp. 79-104), Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp (1988); and, Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H.V., Weikart, D.P., *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27* (Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press, 1993). For an overview of the issues and research, see also the book: Karr-Morse, R., Wiley M.S., *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1997.

² Reynolds, A.J. et al. (2001) Long-term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest: a 15-Year Follow-Up of Low-income Children in Public Schools. *JAMA*.

³ Barnett, W. S. (1996). *Lives in the balance: Age-27 benefit-cost analysis of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program* (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 11). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

⁴ FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team, (1999) “Smart Start: A Six County Study of the Effects of Smart Start Child Care on Kindergarten Entry Skills,” Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center Smart Start Evaluation Team, North Carolina.

⁵ Ensminger, M.E., Kellam, S.G., Rubin, B.R., “School and Family Origins of Delinquency: Comparisons by Sex.” In K.T., Van Dusen & S.A. Mednick (Eds.), *Prospective Studies of Crime and Delinquency*, (pp. 730-97), (1983) Boston, MA; Kluwer-Nijhoff.; Tremblay, R.E., Kurtz, L., Masse, L.C., Vitaro, F., & Pihl, R.O. (1994) . “A Bimodal Intervention for Disruptive Kindergarten Boys; Its Impact Through Midadolescence. Unpublished manuscript. Montreal: University of Montreal, Research Unit on Children’s Psycho-Social Maladjustment; and Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A., Williams, K.R., *Violence in American Schools*, New York, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁶ Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team. (1995). *Cost, quality, and child outcomes in child care centers, executive summary*. Denver, CO: Economics Department, University of Colorado at Denver.

⁷ Cohen, Mark, *The Monetary Value of Saving a High Risk Youth* (1995).

⁸ FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS. (1999). “Poll of Police Chiefs” conducted by George Mason University Professors S. D. Mastroski and S. Keeter,” Washington, DC.