



National League of Cities

Protecting Children & Youth

Issue #1

action kit for Municipal Leaders



Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Dear Municipal Leader:

This kit was created not just for you, but for the children, youth, and families in your community. It is based on the latest research and best practices from across the nation and offers a wide-ranging menu of opportunities for municipal leadership to make children, youth, and family issues a community-wide priority. Whether you are ready to launch a major initiative or are just getting started, the ideas in this kit will help you move forward.

NLC's ongoing series of action kits for municipal leaders, published by the new Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, will address each of the Institute's five core program areas: education; youth development; early childhood development; the safety of children and youth; and family economic security. The goal is to give you and other municipal leaders throughout the country the ideas and the tools you need to take action on these all-important issues for the future of our cities and towns.

Mayors and city councilmembers all across America know that our communities' success depends on the health and well-being of the nation's children, youth, and families. Now is the time to act on this knowledge. As a municipal leader, you have the ability to focus the attention of your community on the needs of children, youth, and families. Working with your colleagues in local government, you can strengthen municipal policies, support effective programs, and bring diverse partners to the table in order to make things happen.

NLC and its Institute for Youth, Education, and Families are eager to assist you in these vital efforts. We encourage you to use this action kit to get started, and we hope you will contact us whenever we might be of assistance. Institute staff are readily available to provide additional information about the strategies highlighted in each of the action kits and to help you identify steps that make sense for your community.

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About the National League of Cities:

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. NLC serves as a national resource and advocate on behalf of over 1700 member cities and for 49 municipal leagues whose membership totals more than 18,000 cities and towns across the country.

The mission of the National League of Cities is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.



About NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families:

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, a special entity within the National League of Cities, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

As a national resource to cities and towns across America, the Institute provides guidance and assistance to municipal officials, compiles and disseminates information on promising strategies and best practices, builds networks of local officials working on similar issues and concerns, and conducts research on the key challenges facing municipalities. NLC's Council on Youth, Education, and Families guides and oversees the Institute's work.



Safeguarding Our Children and Youth

No challenge facing cities and towns is more urgent than protecting our children and youth. Ensuring children's safety at home, keeping them out of harm's way on the streets and at school, and shielding young people from influences that can draw them into acts of crime and violence – these steps are essential to the well-being of our communities.

The lives of young people in our cities and towns are at stake, and municipal leaders know it. But this is about more than the young people themselves; entire communities pay a price when the health and safety of children are threatened. As families in violence-plagued neighborhoods lose their sense of security, property values erode and middle-class residents move out. Gone with them is some of the economic vitality essential to a community's success.

What can mayors, city council members, and other municipal leaders do to keep children and youth safe? This action kit provides a host of ideas and suggestions. From setting

the agenda to working with schools and forging ties between the police and community groups, opportunities for municipal leadership abound.

The action steps in this kit reflect three important lessons that municipal leaders can apply in their communities to protect children and youth:

- ❖ First, families are at the center of effective prevention. Whether the challenge is to prevent child abuse or reduce violence and delinquency by youth, families can and must play a central role.
- ❖ Second, the research suggests that some popular programs are not effective. Municipal leaders must be careful to focus on what works.
- ❖ Finally, strong partnerships with state and county agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations and community groups, are essential to achieve lasting progress.



States and counties often play key roles in safeguarding children and youth – for example, by responding to cases of child abuse, prosecuting and supervising juvenile offenders, and providing mental health services. But municipal leadership is crucial as well: there is no substitute.

Mayors and city council members are uniquely positioned to put children's safety on the public agenda. They can convene community groups, facilitate partnerships between city agencies and other stakeholders, finance promising ini-

tiatives, advocate for needed resources, and hold key actors accountable for results.

If municipal leaders stay on the sidelines, a wealth of opportunities will be lost. On the other hand, with the active involvement of mayors and city council members, there is no telling how much can be accomplished – both for our communities and for the young people who call them home.

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families is indebted to Richard Mendel for his assistance in researching key issues, framing policy recommendations, and preparing multiple drafts of the action steps included in this kit. Laura Waxman and Mike Brown of City Policy Associates took the lead in developing the list of federal resources that can be used to protect children and youth. Cliff Johnson, the Institute's executive director, provided overall editorial direction, and Rafiq Abdus-Sabur assembled key facts on the topics of violence, abuse, and neglect.

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Setting the Agenda

Convene keystakeholders from all segments of the community

A “leadership summit” is often a key first step that opens lines of communication among diverse stakeholders. Police, schools, child welfare and mental health agencies, courts, probation departments, business and civic leaders, community groups, faith institutions, parents, and youth all should be invited to the table. Whether through a day-long conference or a series of meetings, mayors and city council members can use the summit to promote a shared understanding of problems, build a constituency for positive action, and generate the momentum necessary to produce lasting progress.

Launch a community-wide planning process

Many cities and towns have long-term plans that address issues of child abuse, crime, and violence. Some develop their own planning processes, while others rely on outside consultants or planning tools (such as the “Communities That Care” model advocated by the U.S. Department of Justice). Community mapping efforts can guide and inform planning efforts. For example, many police departments have achieved impressive crime reductions by analyzing patterns of crime or violence across neighborhoods and then reallocating resources or making new investments to strengthen prevention efforts in problem areas. Cities can also use mapping strategies to inventory community assets and assess gaps in available services and safe spaces for children and youth.

Conduct a survey of youth throughout the community.

The voices of young people themselves add an important new dimension to planning efforts. Young people are one of the best sources of information about the risks they face and the steps that can be taken to prevent abuse, crime, and violence. By surveying large numbers of young people and by holding focus groups or open meetings with youth, municipal leaders can reap a wealth of information and insights.

Use the “bullypulpit” to put the safety of children first.

Mayors and city council members are among the most visible and influential members of their communities. Simply by communicating a focused message in media interviews, speeches, and community events, local elected officials can draw public attention to the problems of abuse, crime, and violence and urge citizens to get involved. Speeches alone will not keep children and youth safe, but they can set the agenda and lay a foundation for future action.

Example: Indianapolis is one of at least 35 cities nationwide that has organized young people to survey their neighborhoods and assess gaps in resources and opportunities for youth. Through this community mapping effort, teens identified transportation problems that were curtailing use of existing YMCAs and Boys & Girls clubs and highlighted the need for more recreation options downtown and on week-end evenings. The city responded by changing bus routes, reducing public transit fares for youth, opening a new downtown youth center, and providing funding for youth-serving agencies so that they could keep their doors open later on weekends.

Working with Schools

Examine school suspension and expulsion policies

School districts must be able to hold youth accountable for their behavior and protect students from danger. At the same time, school officials also must recognize that suspensions and expulsions can increase risk-taking behavior and undermine public safety by allowing troubled youth to roam the streets unsupervised. Many young people suspended from school today pose no danger to other students and could be appropriately punished for misbehavior through in-school suspensions and other measures that do not sever ties to formal schooling. Communities that implement such discipline policies can reduce delinquency while still ensuring school safety and student accountability.

Hire a coordinator to promote prevention efforts

Schools are an obvious place to operate programs that seek to reduce risk-taking behaviors. Too often, however, schools implement programs that lack any evidence of success and that fail to provide the training or preparation that teachers and other staff need. A city-funded prevention coordinator working in the schools can yield large returns on a modest investment by focusing energies and funds on proven models, providing necessary staff training, and ensuring that programs are evaluated and strengthened over time.

Example: *The St. Cloud Area School District in Minnesota is taking several steps to improve its programs for students who get suspended or expelled from school. With the help of a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, St. Cloud schools are attempting to address behavior problems before they lead to suspension or expulsion, and they are providing academic instruction and life skills training at off-campus sites for students when suspensions are necessary. Students who are expelled from school for a full year can participate in distance learning and community service activities in order to earn credits and remain on grade level.*

Recruit parents to help monitor school grounds and enforce school rules

One of the most frequent complaints voiced by teachers is that they spend too much time maintaining order and monitoring behavior outside the classroom when they could be preparing lessons and working with students. To minimize these burdens on teachers, some schools recruit parent volunteers to serve as monitors in school hallways, cafeterias, and playgrounds. The presence of parents within schools can prompt students to think twice before they engage in violent or disruptive behavior. The broader parent involvement that these programs entail may also improve the school's learning environment.

Use police as school resource officers

Another strategy for promoting school safety while also strengthening bonds between youth and the police is to assign officers to work in high schools or middle schools on an ongoing basis. These school resource officers become an integral part of the school staff, enabling them to build relationships with students and break down barriers between police and young people. Their involvement in schools also makes it easier for police to enforce truancy laws (for example, by conducting home visits when students are absent from school) and to organize summer camps or after-school programs in partnership with school districts.

Targeting High-Risk Children and Families

Intervene on behalf of troubled children

Youth who become chronic offenders almost always show signs of emotional and behavioral problems early in life. Seeking to address these problems early, before they lead to serious delinquency, is the aim of a variety of promising intervention programs. With names such as “The Incredible Years,” “Families and Schools Together,” and “Functional Family Therapy,” these programs typically focus on parents, and many involve school personnel as well. Cities can use these and other models to reduce future offenses by troubled youth and future costs for incarceration or residential treatment.

Develop strategies to identify and help high-risk families

Early intervention also works in preventing child abuse and neglect. By convening interagency task forces at the neighborhood level, for example, cities can develop early warning and early response systems to identify families at extreme risk for abuse. These task forces can strengthen local service delivery systems and ensure that high-risk families receive help quickly. Neighborhood-based family resource centers for troubled and high-risk families also can provide support to parents and help them obtain needed services (ranging from substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling to emergency food and clothing). Communities throughout the nation are now implementing these strategies to strengthen families and protect children. Keeping children safe from abuse and

Forge community partnerships to protect children

neglect is not just the responsibility of a state or county agency. In the belief that protecting children from harm is everybody’s concern, many communities are bringing community organizations, school officials, faith-based institutions, child care providers, and local residents together with child welfare agencies to improve services and support at-risk families. These community partnerships focus attention on family needs and earlier intervention when children are at risk of abuse and neglect. They also make it possible to develop a “dual track” or “differential response” system for community child protection. Child welfare officials and police investigate allegations of abuse or neglect that appear serious, while community agencies assist other high-risk families by connecting them to resources and supports in their own neighborhoods before problems of abuse or neglect emerge.

Give parents priority for substance abuse treatment.

Substance abuse is a factor in more than two-thirds of all child abuse or neglect cases, but treatment programs currently have the capacity to serve only one-third of all individuals in need of such help. Cities can reduce the impact of substance abuse on children by ensuring that parents gain access to treatment. This can be accomplished either by creating treatment slots specifically for parents or by giving parents first priority in existing programs. When sustained over time and coupled with parenting skills training, high-quality treatment can reduce child abuse and neglect and enable children in foster care to return to their homes.

Example: The City of Jacksonville, Florida has forged a community partnership with the school district, the state’s Department of Children and Families, the local United Way, and community-based agencies in an innovative effort to protect children and assist needy families residing in five public housing projects. Based in a local high school, Project Reach offers intensive support for families when children are considered at risk of abuse or neglect but allegations are not deemed serious enough to warrant investigation by the state child protection agency. Separate teams work in each of the five targeted housing projects and encourage the entire community to become involved in this effort to keep children safe.

Reaching Out to Youth

Expand and improve afterschool programs.

By offering supervised activities during non-school hours, afterschool initiatives reduce the likelihood that young people will engage in crime, substance abuse, early sexual activity, and other risk-taking behaviors. Effective programs also promote academic achievement and personal development through a broad array of enrichment activities. Schools and community groups in middle-class and more affluent neighborhoods often support afterschool initiatives through parent fees. Municipal leaders can build upon this base to create a community-wide network that gives all students access to quality afterschool programs.

Create safe havens for youth in every neighborhood.

In many cities and towns, the only places for youth to meet and spend time with their friends are on the street or at the shopping mall – two options that invite trouble. Some communities have sought to create safe havens for young people by keeping school buildings open during afternoons, evenings and weekends. Neighborhood groups and nonprofit agencies typically collaborate with school officials to develop programs for children and parents in these “community schools” (also known as “beacon schools” or “lighted schools”). Other cities have expanded afterschool programs or established new community centers or youth centers to give young people safe places to go during non-school hours.

Example: *The City of San Diego has pledged to provide supervised academic, recreation, and skill-building programs before and after school in each of its 194 elementary and middle schools. The “6 to 6” Extended School Day Program, which began by serving 2,000 students in 31 schools during the 1998-99 school year, will reach an estimated 25,000 students this year. Using city, county, state, and federal funds, the program offers tutoring, mentoring, homework help, arts and crafts, performing arts, sports, and other recreational activities.*

Partner with faith-based institutions to promote mentoring.

Whether in an afterschool program, a community school, or some other setting, children and youth need stable relationships with caring adults. These needs are particularly acute when one or both parents are absent from the home, or when parents are struggling to cope with problems such as substance abuse, depression, joblessness, and domestic violence. Building on research that documents the effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring, many cities are now working with local churches and other faith-based institutions to recruit mentors for at-risk children in low-income communities.

Provide alternative or “second chance” learning opportunities.

The difference between chronic offending and re-engagement in mainstream society for troubled youth often hinges on access to a high school diploma and a stable job. Alternative or “second chance” education and training programs can provide a crucial lifeline for youth who fail to thrive in traditional school settings. Many youth programs, including YouthBuild and service or conservation corps initiatives, have an impressive track record teaching basic academic, work readiness, decision-making, and occupational skills. Alternative education programs also can provide options for continued learning and supervision when students are suspended or expelled from school. Unfortunately, such “second chance” learning opportunities are in short supply in most communities.

Hire “streetworkers” to reach out to disconnected youth.

Many teenagers and young adults who become engaged in crime or delinquency neither attend school nor work in a stable job. To reconnect them to the societal mainstream, youth workers can reach out to young people on the streets, provide counseling, and make referrals to appropriate programs and agencies. These streetworkers also can turn out to be valuable partners for local police: their involvement with youth often yields new information regarding gang activities and the drug trade in local neighborhoods.

Promoting Partnerships with Police

Adopt community-oriented policing strategies

Effective community policing does more than assign police officers to neighborhood beats. It also forges problem-solving partnerships with local residents to address community conditions that contribute to crime – problems such as poor lighting, open alcohol and drug consumption, gang-related graffiti, and drug activity in vacant buildings. Community policing can be difficult to implement and sustain because it requires police to move beyond traditional law enforcement roles. At the same time, these strategies have often succeeded in getting citizens actively involved in anti-crime efforts and reducing crime in troubled neighborhoods.

Implement anti-truancy programs linked to supportive services

Assigning police units to round up truant youngsters and release them to their parents is often unproductive. Police enforcement of truancy laws can be effective, however, when combined with counseling and social services to determine and address the root causes of students' nonattendance. Many cities are reducing school absenteeism as well as petty crime and delinquency by creating partnerships where police conduct periodic truancy sweeps and then take youths directly to youth centers providing comprehensive assessment, counseling, and service referrals for youth and their families.

Improve police training to help children who witness violence

Children who witness acts of violence – in their homes or on the streets – can become predisposed to violence themselves if they do not receive help. Police officers typically are the first adults that children see in the wake of violent or tragic episodes, but most officers lack the time, training, and practical support to respond to children's needs. Cities can help to minimize the long-term effects of young people's exposure to violence by training police to identify children at risk of psychological trauma and notify or make referrals to appropriate community agencies, and by forging strong partnerships between police and mental health/child welfare agencies. Police have long recognized that large numbers of crimes occur in a relative handful of locations. Crime Prevention Through

Establish an office or program to “design out crime.”

Environmental Design (CPTED) focuses on the environmental factors that make these locations ripe for crime and violence. Historically, police departments and city planning agencies have paid little attention to problems posed by poor lighting, uncontrolled access to buildings and courtyards, hidden corners, dark alleys, abandoned buildings, and ungated vacant lots. By establishing a CPTED office or initiative, municipal leaders can address these risk factors directly and make neighborhoods safer for children, youth, and families throughout the community.

Ensure aggressive monitoring of high-risk youth offenders

Youth offenders returning home from juvenile correction or residential treatment centers often are the most dangerous youth in our communities, and yet juvenile justice systems historically have devoted insufficient resources to monitoring returnees and providing them with the counseling and supportive services they need. Partnerships between police and juvenile probation staff can reduce the amount of crime perpetrated by these young people. The most successful efforts pair probation officers with police for joint evening patrols to check up on high-risk probationers and make sure they are adhering

to their curfews and other probation restrictions. These efforts also connect youth to education and training programs and other positive resources that will help them find employment, obey the law, and avoid re-arrest.

Example: In the early 1990s Boston created Operation Night Light, a new partnership between police officers and probation staff to supervise juvenile and young offenders in the city's high crime neighborhoods. Police and probation officers conduct joint evening patrols, including nighttime visits to the homes of high-risk probationers, and also visit offenders' schools and worksites. This approach, replicated in many jurisdictions nationwide, has dissuaded offenders from violating the conditions of probation and played a key role in Boston's dramatic reductions in juvenile violence.



Supporting Parents

Invest in programs that help new parents.

One of the most powerful steps municipal leaders can take to help ensure the health and safety of children is to support programs that send trained health workers into the homes of pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. Home visiting programs can reduce child abuse and promote healthy child development by teaching essential parenting skills, averting family crises, and promoting access to needed health and social services. Effective programs typically use trained professionals to provide direct services as well as case management and follow a well-designed program model over many years.

Expand preschool efforts that strengthen parenting

Preschool initiatives that include a strong emphasis on parental involvement and support offer another key way to strengthen families and protect children. The evidence is overwhelming: enriched early childhood programs can dramatically improve the future success of low-income children and sharply reduce the likelihood of crime or delinquency later in life. Mayors and city council members can capitalize on this knowledge by seeking to expand and upgrade preschool programs in their communities. Investments and community partnerships to boost enrollments, provide staff training, reduce turnover through higher staff salaries, and enhance parent outreach and involvement can all make a substantial difference.

Recruit foster parents and adoptive parents.

In many communities, efforts to care for abused and neglected children suffer due to a crippling shortage of foster parents and adoptive parents. Local elected officials can help fill this gap by working with city and community agencies to highlight the problem and organize new or expanded recruitment efforts. Useful strategies include public service ads on television, radio, and public transit as well as posters or flyers distributed through community groups. These steps also are valuable when recruiting volunteers to serve as court-appointed advocates for children in court proceedings and as members of citizen review boards that examine child welfare cases.

Support kinship care providers.

More than two million children live in households headed by a relative (typically a grandparent) but with neither parent present. These “kinship care” providers on average are older, poorer, less educated, and more likely to be single than other foster parents, but many receive little help in caring for their young relatives. Cities and towns can recognize the important contributions that these grandparents and other relatives make to the safety of children and youth by helping to arrange needed respite care, creating support groups, and advocating for better state policies that affect kinship care providers.

Help low-income parents meet their families’ basic needs.

Parents who struggle to earn an adequate income often face a myriad of problems, including long or irregular work hours, inadequate health care, poor nutrition, higher levels of stress and depression, and homelessness or unstable housing arrangements. These problems complicate and undermine their efforts to raise their children. Cities can take some of the pressure off these families by mounting outreach campaigns that inform parents of available assistance (such as health insurance through Medicaid or state Child Health Insurance Programs, nutritional assistance through food stamps, and extra income through the federal Earned Income Tax Credit). Over the longer term, municipal leaders can develop public job creation and job training initiatives that boost parents’ skills and future earnings.

Example: *The Stamford (CT) School Readiness Program is a collaborative effort by the City of Stamford, the local board of education, and a nonprofit child care organization. Through grants to programs operating in public schools and other community-based sites, the initiative now supports both full-day and half-day programs for more than 400 four-year-olds and soon will be expanded to serve three-year-olds. Stamford’s comprehensive effort includes parent involvement meetings, courses, and support groups as well as professional development training for staff and community child care providers.*



Restricting Access to Guns

Promote safe storage of guns

Nearly one-third of all handguns in America are stored loaded and unlocked. Unsafe storage of guns contributes directly to violent crimes by youth and adults as well as teen suicides and accidental child deaths or injuries. To combat these problems, a growing number of cities have enacted new laws requiring that gun owners store their firearms safely and attend gun safety training sessions. Local communities also are mounting campaigns to distribute gun safety devices such as lock boxes and trigger locks in order to prevent the theft or accidental use of firearms.

Enact local gun control ordinances

At least 30 states do not allow communities to impose their own restrictions on gun purchases or ownership. Five states (California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, and Massachusetts) specifically grant local governments the right to enact gun control laws. In four other states (Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington), cities have some discretion in crafting local gun control ordinances. In states that do allow local gun control, many municipalities have taken positive steps to restrict gun access. For example, local governments in California's East Bay area had enacted nearly 50 local gun ordinances by late 1998 either to restrict the sale of "Saturday Night Specials" and other "junk guns" or to impose zoning restrictions regulating home-based gun sales.

Find other ways to get guns off the streets

Even in states that prohibit local governments from passing laws to regulate the purchase or licensing of firearms, cities have found creative ways to restrict the availability of guns. One approach is to offer a cash "bounty" to citizens who provide information leading to the confiscation of illegal guns. Another promising strategy involves seeking parents' cooperation in searching for and seizing handguns from juveniles. Gun "buy-backs" are perhaps the most popular strategy employed by cities that want to get guns off the streets. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to date that these voluntary exchanges of cash for guns are effective in reducing gun crimes.



Work with federal authorities to combat gun trafficking

Our nation suffered a dramatic increase in juvenile homicides in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This sharp jump was due almost exclusively to a rise in homicides involving firearms, which tripled among juveniles from 1984 to 1994. In recent years, many local police departments have partnered with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to identify the suppliers of guns used in crimes, interrupt illicit gun markets, and shut down irresponsible gun dealers. Other cities have forged partnerships with U.S. Attorneys offices to aggressively prosecute gun criminals in federal court, where convicted felons often receive prison terms that are far longer than those handed down in state courts.

Offer gun awareness training for first-time gun offenders

Many young people who carry guns or other weapons have no intention to use them. Even when seeking only to enhance their status with peers or to boost their sense of security, however, the result is often tragic. Many cities and counties have reduced the numbers of youth carrying guns and re-arrested on weapons charges by requiring those arrested for weapons possession to participate in gun education workshops. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, "Early research suggests that even a four-hour educational program can change attitudes about guns" by giving young people "an opportunity to question their choice to carry a weapon and recognize the harm it can lead to."

Example: Responding to a rapid rise in homicides and other gun crimes by adolescents in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the St. Louis Police Department launched an ambitious effort to visit homes where illegal gun possession (particularly juvenile gun possession) is suspected. Police officials created a new form, the "Consent to Search and Seize," that enables adult residents to authorize a search for illegal weapons inside a home in return for an agreement from police not to prosecute anyone in the home for possession of any guns they uncover. St. Louis police have conducted about 260 searches per year under such agreements, finding one or more guns in roughly half of the homes searched and seizing more than 1,300 guns during the first three years of the program.

After a substantial increase from 1984 to 1993, crime and violence by youth are declining.

- ❖ The arrest rate for murder among youth ages 10-17 declined by 52 percent from 1993 to 1998 (from 14.4 to 6.9 arrests per 100,000 youth).
- ❖ The overall juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes dropped by 27 percent during the same period (from 505 to 370 arrests per 100,000 youth).

Nonetheless, youth crime and violence remain serious problems in America.

- ❖ In 1997, 1,700 youths under the age of 18 were implicated in 1,400 murders. The number of murders involving juvenile offenders was the lowest in a decade, but it remained 31 percent higher than the average from 1980 through 1984.
- ❖ The violent crime rate rises rapidly as youth enter their early teens, reaches its peak at age 18, and then declines rapidly thereafter.

Violent crime – particularly gun violence – remains all too common in the lives of our nation's youth.

- ❖ Firearms killed 4,205 young people ages 19 and under in 1997 – nearly 12 every day. Of these, 2,562 were murdered, 1,262 committed suicide, and 306 were victims of accidental shootings.
- ❖ Gun violence is an equal opportunity disaster. Of the nearly 84,000 children and teens killed by gunfire between 1979 and 1998, 61 percent were White and 36 percent were Black.
- ❖ Between 1980 and 1997, three out of four murder victims ages 12 or older were killed with a firearm.
- ❖ In 1998, more children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined.

Children and youth are at greater risk of becoming victims of a violent crime than they are of committing violent crimes.

- ❖ Youth ages 12-17 are twice as likely as adults to be victims of serious violent crime and three times as likely to be victims of simple assault.
- ❖ Among the 1,268 young people (under 18) who were murdered in 1994 and whose killers were known, 70 percent were murdered by adults – not other youths.

All too often, children are victimized in their own homes.

- ❖ There were 984,000 confirmed cases of child maltreatment (including physical abuse, neglect, medical neglect, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse) in 1997.
- ❖ Three-fourths of these child abuse and neglect perpetrators were parents, and an additional 10 percent were other relatives.

This epidemic abuse and neglect of children has deep and long lasting consequences – for children and for our nation as a whole.

- ❖ Abuse and neglect during the critical first three years of life can permanently damage a child's emotional and behavioral development.
- ❖ Children who suffer abuse and neglect are significantly more likely than other children to commit crime or violence during adolescence. A study in Sacramento, California found that children who had been referred to child protection agencies for suspicion of abuse or neglect were 67 times more likely than other children to be arrested between the ages of 9 and 12.

Despite several alarming incidents in recent years, schools are the safest place for children.

- ❖ In 1997, students ages 12-18 were three times as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school (24 victimizations per 1,000 students) than at school (8 victimizations per 1,000 students).
- ❖ Of more than 2,500 children nationwide who died by murder or suicide during the second half of 1997, less than one percent were killed on school property, at a school-sponsored event, or on the way to or from school or a school-sponsored event.

Youth violence (as well as property crimes and other risk-taking behaviors) most often occurs during afterschool hours.

- ❖ The peak hour for juvenile violent crimes is 3 p.m., immediately after school, whereas the peak hours for violent crimes by adults are from 9 p.m. until midnight.
- ❖ Afterschool programs and activities can substantially reduce violence and other risk-taking behavior among youth. For instance, youth participating in the four-year Quantum Opportunities Program had less than half as many arrests as non-participating youth and were less than one-sixth as likely to be convicted of a crime.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Department of Justice; Children's Defense Fund; Child Welfare League of America.

While local and state governments provide the lion's share of public safety funding, including funding for efforts designed to keep children and youth safe, a number of federal programs address specific safety goals and can be used to complement or expand local and state safety programs. Some programs fund local governments directly; others provide funding to state governments that supports programs and services by local or state agencies.

Juvenile Justice Funding is provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to localities, states and territories, and private organizations through both block grants and discretionary grants. Two programs are likely to be of particular interest: Title V incentive grants will provide \$95 million in FY 2001 as block grants to the states for local delinquency prevention programs, and the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) will channel \$16 million on a competitive basis directly to local agencies for one-to-one mentoring projects for youth at risk of educational failure, dropping out of school, or involvement in delinquent activities, including gangs and substance abuse. OJJDP also is contemplating discretionary awards for new projects in FY 2001 in subject areas such as helping juvenile offenders reenter their communities and helping youth and families prevent violence. Total FY 2001 funding for all OJJDP programs is \$299 million.

U.S. Department of Justice Contact: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (800) 638-8736.

Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants provide formula grants to local governments and states for programs to promote greater accountability in the juvenile justice system. To receive these funds, the state must certify that its legislation, policies, and practices include the prosecution of juveniles as adults, graduated sanctions, juvenile record-keeping, and parental supervision. Activities to which funds may be applied include prosecution, pre-trial services, courts, drug courts, detention facilities, and probation. FY 2001 funding is \$250 million.

U.S. Department of Justice Contact: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (800) 638-8736.

Local Law Enforcement Block Grant provides formula grants to local governments and states for a wide range of purposes, including: hiring additional law enforcement personnel and paying overtime to presently employed personnel; procuring equipment and technology; enhancing security in and around schools; establishing drug courts; enhancing the adjudication of cases involving violent offenders, including juveniles; and establishing crime prevention programs which involve cooperation between community residents and law enforcement personnel. FY 2001 funding is \$523 million.

U.S. Department of Justice Contact: Mary Santonastasso, Bureau of Justice Assistance, (202) 514-6638.

Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance

provides state and local agencies with grant funds in areas such as personnel, equipment, facilities, personnel training, prosecution and adjudication. Most of the funds are provided as a block grant to the states, with a portion of the funds passed through to local governments. The remaining funds are used for discretionary grants to public agencies and private non-profit organizations. FY 2001 funding is \$500 million for formula grants, \$69 million for discretionary grants.

U.S. Department of Justice Contacts: In the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Mary Santonastasso for formula grants, (202) 514-6638; Albert Pearsall for discretionary grants, (202) 514-5943.

COPS in Schools is designed to help local law enforcement agencies hire community policing officers to work in the schools, providing an incentive for law enforcement agencies to build working relationships with schools and use community policing to combat school violence. Grants are awarded to provide for a designated portion of the salary and benefits of each new officer over three years, with a maximum federal contribution of \$125,000 per officer. FY 2001 funding is \$180 million.

U.S. Department of Justice Contact: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, (202) 514-2058.

21st Century Community Learning Centers Program provides funds to high-need rural and urban communities that have: low-achieving students; high rates of juvenile crime, school violence and student drug abuse; and insufficient resources to establish community learning centers. Grants go to public schools or consortia of schools and may be used to plan, implement, or expand community learning centers in entities within a public school building that provide educational, recreational, health, and social service programs for community residents of all ages, and that are operated by a local education agency in conjunction with local governmental agencies, businesses, and private non-profit organizations. FY 2000 funding is \$453 million.

U.S. Department of Education Contact: Amanda Clyburn, Office of School Improvement Programs, (202) 260-3804.

Gang Resistance Education and Training provides funds to local and state law enforcement agencies to educate youth about the dangers of joining street gangs and participating in violent crime. G.R.E.A.T. is a cooperative program that utilizes the skills of personnel from: the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; federal, state and local law enforcement agencies; and community/civic groups. The program's primary focus is school-based education, typically training police officers to provide instruction to elementary-school and middle-school students in gang prevention and anti-violence techniques. G.R.E.A.T funding also can be used to support afterschool programs, summer education, booster classes, and parent involvement efforts. FY 2001 funding is \$13 million.

U.S. Department of Treasury Contact: James Scott, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, (800) 726-7070.



Runaway and Homeless Youth programs include: 1) the Basic Center Program to alleviate problems of runaway and homeless youth, reunite youth with their families, and strengthen family relationships; 2) the Transitional Living Program to provide homeless youth with shelter, skills training and support services for up to 18 months; and 3) the Street Outreach Program to provide education and prevention services to runaway, homeless and street youth who have been subjected to, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation or abuse. Local governments or combinations of local governments, state governments, and public or private non-profit agencies and institutions are eligible to apply for the Basic Center and Transitional Living Programs; private, non-profit agencies are eligible for Street Outreach Program funding. FY 2000 funding is \$43.6 million.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Contact: Youth and Families Operations Center, (800) 351-2293.

Child Mental Health Service Initiative provides community-based systems of care for children and adolescents with a serious emotional disturbance and their families. Under the program, services are to be provided collaboratively across child-serving systems, each child or adolescent served must receive an individualized service plan developed with the participation of the family, each individualized plan designates a case manager to assist the child and family, and funding is provided for mental health services required to meet the child's needs. FY 2000 funding is \$55 million.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Contact: Gary DeCarolis, Center for Mental Health Services, (301) 443-1333.

Safe & Drug-Free Schools Program is the federal government's primary vehicle for reducing violence and substance use (including drugs, alcohol and tobacco) through education and prevention activities in schools. It includes: 1) formula-based state grants to state and local education agencies and to governors for a wide range of school- and community-based education and prevention activities; and 2) discretionary grants for initiatives that respond to emerging needs, including direct grants to school districts and communities with severe violence and substance abuse problems. FY 2000 funding is \$346 million for state grants and \$110.8 million for discretionary grants.

U.S. Department of Education Contact: Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, (202) 260-3954.

Drug-Free Communities Support Program is intended to: 1) reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults; 2) enable community coalitions to strengthen intergovernmental and community collaboration; 3) enhance intergovernmental collaboration within communities that demonstrate a long-term commitment to reducing substance abuse among youth and adults; and 4) enable communities to conduct prevention planning. Community coalitions that are, or are affiliated with, either units of local government or non-profit corporations are eligible to apply for grants. FY 2001 funding is \$40 million.

U.S. Department of Justice Contact: Lauren Ziegler, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (202) 616-8988.

In addition to the programs listed above which provide funds directly to local agencies, several programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provide state governments with funds which can either be passed through to local agencies or used by state agencies to address local needs.

Promoting Safe and Stable Families funds states to provide community-based family support, family preservation and family reunification services. FY 2000 funding is \$285 million.

Community-Based Family Resource and Support Grants assist states in developing and implementing, or expanding and enhancing, a comprehensive statewide system of community-based family resource and support services. FY 2000 funding is \$33 million.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funds states to develop and implement prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs directed at alcohol and drug abuse. FY 2000 funding is \$1.52 billion.

Community Mental Health Services Block Grant funds states to provide comprehensive community mental health services to children with serious emotional disturbances and to adults with serious mental illnesses. FY 2000 funding is \$338 million.

For further help in developing or financing city efforts to protect children and youth, contact:

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National League of Cities
(202) 626-3013
cjohnson@nlc.org