

# America's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time

A research brief by

## FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

This brief is based on a report by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, an anti-crime group of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victims of violence, youth violence experts and leaders of police associations. The report's authors are: James Alan Fox, The Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice, Northeastern University; Edward A. Flynn, Massachusetts Secretary of Public Safety; and FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' president Sanford Newman and research director William Christeson. For the full report and citations for this brief, see [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).

### The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime

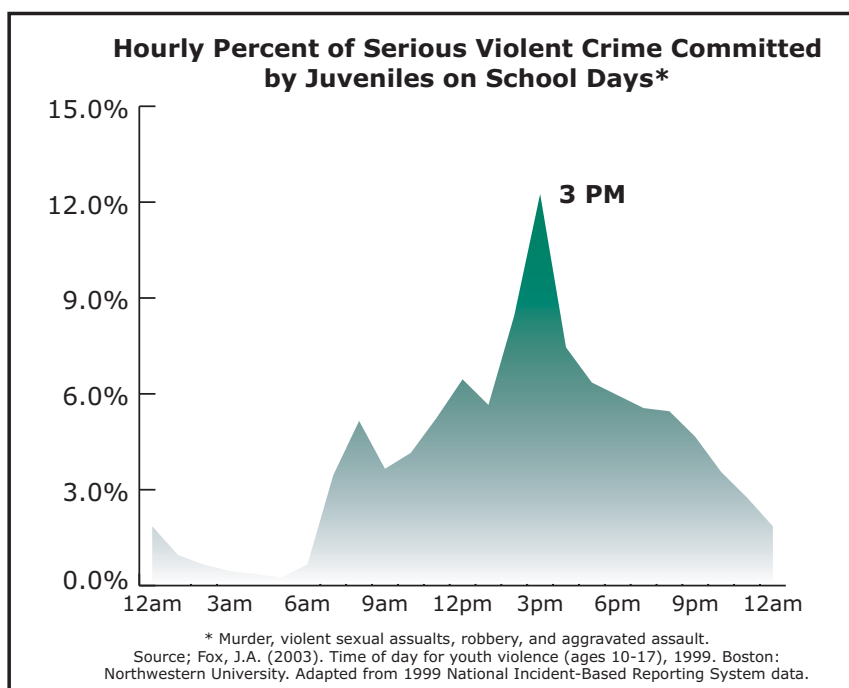
When the school bell rings, turning millions of children and teens out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime suddenly soars. On school days, the hours from 3-6 PM are the peak hours for teens to:

- Commit crimes.
- Be victims of crime.
- Be in or cause a car crash.
- Smoke, drink or use drugs.

### After-School Programs Cut Crime, Teach Skills and Values

Quality youth development programs can cut crime immediately and transform this prime time for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect both kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut teen pregnancy, smoking, and drug use while they help youngsters develop the values and skills they need to become contributing citizens. For example:

- Randomly selected high school freshmen from welfare families were assigned to participate in the Quantum Opportunities four-year, after-school and graduation incentive program. Six years later, compared to those who received the program, boys left out averaged six times more



criminal convictions, and girls and boys left out were nearly four times more likely to be without a high school degree. They were also 50 percent more likely to have had children during their high school years.

- In a study conducted in several U.S. cities, five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug activity.
- Young people who were randomly assigned to a

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**“It’s a lot cheaper to pay now for after-school programs than to pay later to put a kid in jail”**

Gil Kerlikowske, Chief of Police, Seattle

**“When the peak hours of violent juvenile crime are between the end of school and 6:00 P.M., it’s just common sense to provide the after-school programs that give kids the values and skills they need to say ‘no’ to crime and violence.”**

Loery Baca, Sheriff, (Los Angeles County, CA)

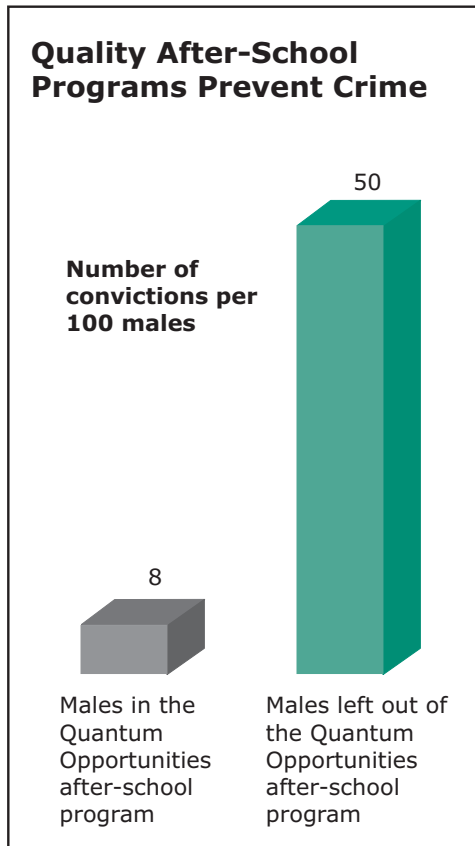
Big Brothers/Big Sisters waiting list were almost twice as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly three times more likely to hit someone compared to those who were given a mentor.

- The Bay View Safe Haven after-school program in San Francisco matched participants with similar non-participants. For the youths with prior histories of arrest, participants were half as likely as non-participants to be re-arrested within six months after joining the program.
- A study of an after-school and summer program in a Canadian housing project showed that compared to the two years prior to the program, the number of juvenile arrests declined by 75 percent.

Will all after-school programs produce these results? Of course not. Quality program design and adequate numbers of caring, well-trained staff are essential.

## Government Is Dropping the Ball

Good after-school and summer programs cost approximately \$4,000 a year—about the same as tuition at a public university. Even if working parents can afford such fees, there just aren’t enough good programs.



On a regular basis, more than ten million children and teens lack constructive after-school activities supervised by caring adults. Millions of other children and teens would also benefit if after-school programs helped parents provide kids with alternatives to watching TV and hanging out at malls or on street corners. Over the last few years federal funding has grown, and some states have begun their own after-school programs. Unfortunately, state and federal governments are far from meeting the need and many programs are threatened with budget cuts.

## Investments that Save Money

The Quantum Opportunities after-school program produced benefits to participants and the public of \$3 for every \$1 spent, without accounting for the savings from a dramatic reduction in crime. Failing to invest in quality after-school programs squanders billions of dollars.

## Law Enforcement is United

Law enforcement leaders and researchers agree: more of our nation’s children, especially those most at-risk, must have access to quality after-school programs if crime is to be prevented. It is time to invest in programs proven to help kids avoid crime and save thousands of Americans from becoming victims of violence.

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Source citation and other research are available at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org)

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## Endnotes:

The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime:

Peak hours for crime are from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM:

Fox, J. A. (2003). *Time of day for youth violence (ages 10-17)*, 1999. Boston: Northwestern University. Adapted from 1999 National Incident-Based Reporting System data.

Peak hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime:

Fox, J. A. (2003). *Time of day for youth violence (ages 10-17)*, 1999. Boston: Northwestern University. Adapted from 1999 National Incident-Based Reporting System data.

Peak hours to be in or cause a car crash:

Rice, T. (2000). Los Angeles: Southern California Injury Prevention Research Center, School of Public Health, University of California-Los Angeles. At the request of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Professor Rice found that during the months when school is in session, the peak hours for teens 16-17 to cause automobile accidents—as well as the peak hours for them to be in such an accident—are from 3-6 pm.

Peak hours when kids will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs:

Richardson, J. L., Dwyer, K., McGuigan, K., Hansen, W. B., Dent, C., Johnson, C. A., Sussman, S. Y., Brannon, B., & Flay, B. (1989). Substance use among eighth-grade students who take care of themselves after school. —*Pediatrics*, 84(3), 556-566.

## After-School Programs Cut Crime, Teach Skills and Values:

Quantum Opportunities research results:

Lattimore, C. B., Mihalic, S. F., Grotmeter, J. K., & Taggart, R. (1998). *The Quantum Opportunities Program*. In D.S. Elliot (Series Ed.), *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book four*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

Boys & Girls Club research results:

Schinke, S. P., Orlandi, M. A., & Cole, K. C. (1992). Boys and Girls Clubs in public housing developments: Prevention services for youths at risk. *Journal of Community Psychology*, OSAP Special Issue, 118-128.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters research results:

Tierney, J. P., Grossman, J. B., & Resch, N. L. (1995). *Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. Retrieved from the Public/Private Ventures Web site: <http://www.ppv.org/pdf/files/mad.pdf>

BayView Safe Haven research results:

LaFrance, S., Twersky, F., Latham, N., Foley, E., & Bott, C. (2001).

*A safe place for healthy youth development: A comprehensive evaluation of the Bayview Safe Haven, a component of San Francisco's local action plan for juvenile justice reform*. San Francisco, CA: BTW Consultants, Inc. and LaFrance Associates.

Canadian Housing Project research results:

Jones, M. A., & Offord, D. R. (1989). Reduction of antisocial behavior in poor children by nonschool skill-development. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 30, 737-750.

## Government is Dropping the Ball:

Fees for good after-school and summer programs cost approximately \$4,000 a year:

National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2003). *Making the case: A fact sheet on children and youth in out-of-school time*. Retrieved from [http://www.niost.org/publications/Factsheet\\_2003.PDF](http://www.niost.org/publications/Factsheet_2003.PDF)

Cost of tuition at a public university:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (2003). *Student charges and financial aid: 2002-2003*. Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The average cost of tuition and fees for a public four-year institution in the United States was \$4,110 for the 2002-2003 academic year.

## Investments that Save Money:

Quantum Opportunities cost savings:

Lattimore, C. B., Mihalic, S. F., Grotmeter, J. K., & Taggart, R. (1998). *The Quantum Opportunities Program*. In D.S. Elliot (Series Ed.), *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book four*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

## Law Enforcement is United:

Law Enforcement poll results:

In response to a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, an overwhelming 71 percent of the nation's law enforcement leaders chose providing "more educational child care programs for preschool age children and after-school programs for school age youngsters" as the strategy with the greatest impact in reducing youth violence and crime. Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2002, August). *National law enforcement leadership survey*. Retrieved from the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Web site: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/nationalkidspoll2002.pdf>. Note: Many respondents favored adopting more than one strategy, and a majority ranked hiring more police officers as the second strategy with the greatest impact.