



Crime Prevention in California Building Successful Programs

Background

The rising costs of operating the criminal justice system have prompted policymakers to consider directing resources toward crime prevention programs. Successful crime prevention programs could reduce long-term criminal justice costs, but implementing effective programs requires a better understanding of existing prevention programs.

LAO Findings

We found that there are several problems with the state's existing crime prevention programs:

- ❖ Programs generally report little detailed information about program expenditures and results. Consequently, it is difficult to hold programs accountable for performance.
- ❖ There is also a lack of information about which programs are effective in reducing crime, due to the small number of programs that are evaluated for effectiveness. In addition, even when information is available, it is not consistently used to modify program design and funding.
- ❖ There is a lack of coordination among the multiple state departments that administer crime prevention programs which results in duplication of effort and inefficiencies.

LAO Recommendations

To address these problems, we recommend that the Legislature:

- ❖ Develop standardized review criteria which can be used to determine funding allocations for new and existing crime prevention programs.
- ❖ Require and fund well-designed impact evaluations that increase knowledge about the types of crime prevention programs which are effective, and therefore should be funded.
- ❖ Establish a state crime prevention office (within an existing entity or new organization) to develop a strategic plan to coordinate statewide crime prevention activities.



INTRODUCTION

The rising costs of operating the criminal justice system have prompted policymakers to consider alternative ways to reduce crime. Broadly defined, *crime prevention* can be any program that causes fewer crimes to occur than would have otherwise in the absence of the program. In that sense, any criminal justice, education, or social service program that causes a reduction in crime can be said to be a crime prevention activity. For example, public assistance provides financial support, such that an individual might resort to crime if the support did not exist. Similarly, incarceration may keep an offender out of the community where he might commit another crime.

While crime prevention may be a by-product of these programs, it is not their primary goal. Thus, a more narrow definition of crime prevention focuses on treatment and preventive activities. Such an approach addresses the root causes of criminal behavior without relying on prosecution or incarceration as the means of achieving crime prevention. This is the definition used in this report.

Implementation of successful crime prevention programs requires a better understanding of the effectiveness of California's current crime prevention programs. While more resources have been allocated toward crime prevention in recent years, limited attention has been given to evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. Another issue concerns the *state's administration* of crime prevention programs delivered at the local level.

Lack of a coordinated state response to crime prevention could result in duplication of effort and inefficient use of limited resources.

In this report, we first discuss the costs of crime in California, both in terms of direct expenditures by the criminal justice system as well as the costs to victims. We also describe the roles of federal, state, and local governments in creating and implementing crime prevention programs. Next, we present key elements of successful crime prevention programs and profile a model crime prevention program. Finally, we highlight problems with California's current state-funded crime prevention programs and recommend actions the Legislature can take to address these concerns. The overall thrust of these recommendations is that the Legislature should adopt a coordinated approach to allocating resources for crime prevention based on standardized criteria.

The Cost of Crime

California's criminal justice system expenditures exceeded \$17 billion (all funds) in 1997 (the most recent year for which data are available). About 80 percent of these costs were for law enforcement and corrections, with the remainder for prosecution and judicial programs, as shown in Figure 1. These expenditures have increased by about 6 percent annually since 1990. In addition to these operating costs, the state and counties have spent several billion dollars in recent years for construction of additional correctional facilities.

In addition to these direct costs to operate the criminal justice system, there are costs to the victims of crime. These costs include the tangible costs of medical services and lost earnings, as well as intangible costs for pain, suffering, and lost quality of life. While these costs are assumed to be high, the exact magnitude is difficult to quantify. Research from the National Institute of Justice has found that the average cost to society for the victim who dies as a result of a crime is about \$3 million and the cost to the victim of an assault with injuries ranges from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Using these estimates, the 1998 total victim-related cost to California was probably more than \$10 billion. Although California's crime rate has decreased substantially during the last decade, the total cost of crime, which includes costs to victims

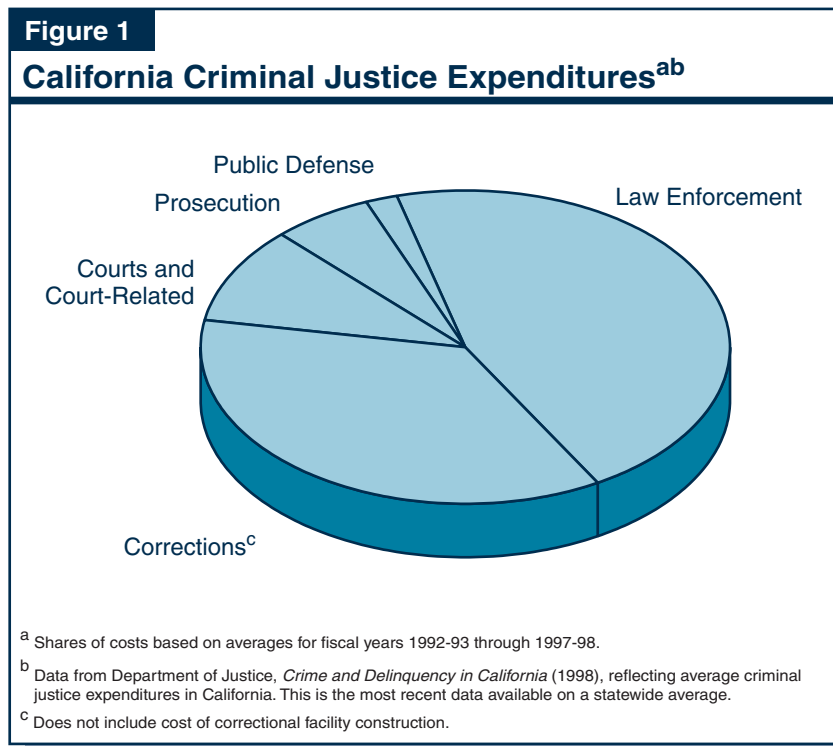
and the criminal justice system, has increased, resulting in higher costs per crime incident.

Effects of Prevention Programs. Successful crime prevention programs could potentially reduce, or at least slow the growth in long-term corrections and law enforcement costs. According to researchers at RAND, for example, programs such as graduation incentives and parent training may be more cost-effective than certain incarceration alternatives. RAND predicted that these two preventive programs would reduce crime by 22 percent at an annual cost of less than \$1 billion, whereas the Three-Strikes-and-You're-Out law would reduce crime by 21 percent, but at five times the annual cost of prevention programs.

While variation in crime reduction and actual cost savings exists among different types of prevention programs, other program evaluations have also found that some prevention programs can result in greater cost savings than incarceration. The prospect of significant cost savings has provided an incentive for governments to consider crime prevention as a supplement to conventional criminal justice activities.

Federal-State-Local Roles in Crime Prevention

California's crime prevention programs are supported by a network of relationships between





the federal, state, and local governments. We discuss the roles and responsibilities of each level of government below.

Federal. The federal government’s role in crime prevention relates primarily to initiating nationwide crime prevention policies and providing states with funding (often in the form of block grants) to implement programs that meet the policy objectives. Examples of federal laws that fund a number of crime prevention programs include the:

- ◆ Violence Against Women Act of 1988.
- ◆ Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994.
- ◆ Juvenile Crime Control and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1997.

Responsibility for the administration of the federal programs is divided among many federal departments and agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice. These agencies are responsible for monitoring the fiscal compliance and overall program performance of crime prevention funds distributed to the states. However, research by the U.S. General Accounting Office has indicated that federal oversight activity has been limited.

State. Most federal crime prevention funds are administered at the state level. In California, the Governor’s Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) administers the majority of federal crime prevention funds. In 1999, California received

more than \$100 million in federal funds for crime prevention grant programs.

While federal funding is substantial, we estimate it comprises only about 25 percent of California’s crime prevention expenditures. Most crime prevention programs are initiated and funded by state General Fund revenues. Since crime prevention programs are supported by a range of public and private funding sources and include a broad range of activities, it is difficult to determine exactly how much is spent on these programs in California.

We have identified 13 state agencies and departments that are responsible for administering more than 40 prevention programs in California. (These programs are discussed in more detail in the following section.) The state agency administering the program generally has several responsibilities including:

- ◆ Selecting fund recipients.
- ◆ Providing technical assistance.
- ◆ Overseeing the program.
- ◆ Evaluating the program.

Local. Local governments are generally the final recipients of federal and state crime prevention funding and are responsible for developing and implementing individual programs. Programs are implemented by local schools, law enforcement agencies, or community-based organizations. In addition to direct program responsibilities, local providers are also responsible for data collection

and evaluation of individual programs. There are many local crime prevention programs that re-

ceive funding solely from local governments and charitable organizations.

CALIFORNIA'S "PORTFOLIO" OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS

For purposes of this report, crime prevention programs are organized by the institutional setting in which they primarily take place—community, family, school, or criminal justice agency. Figure 2 lists the settings in which California's crime prevention programs operate. As the figure shows, in 2000-01, the state will spend about \$500.8 million on these programs, most of which are focused on young people. About 34 percent of the programs take place in communities and about 34 percent take place in schools. The remainder are divided between families and criminal justice agencies. (The appendix at the end of this report lists individual programs and funding levels by the administering state agency.)

Community Programs

Community crime prevention is based on the notion that individuals at the local level are the most well-equipped to design and implement programs that focus on the specific needs of the community. These programs are often targeted at increasing the overall

well-being of the community as opposed to targeting a specific crime. Examples of community crime prevention programs include:

- ◆ After-school programs that provide supervised educational and leisure activities to at-risk youth.
- ◆ Mentor programs that provide positive role models for at-risk youth.
- ◆ Community policing that encourage neighborhoods to work with law enforcement to proactively deter crime.

California funds 14 programs that support community-based crime prevention at an annual cost of \$108 million. Most of these programs

Figure 2

California Crime Prevention: Institutional Settings

(Dollars in Millions)

Institutional Setting	Expenditures		Number of Programs
	1999-00	2000-01	
Community	\$106.2	\$108.1	14
Family	87.1	87.0	4
School	201.2	191.0	14
Criminal Justice	106.4	114.7	9
Totals	\$500.9	\$500.8	41



support supervision, mentoring, or after-school activities for at-risk juveniles and their families.

Research Findings. California’s programs generally have not been evaluated to determine whether the funded activities have actually reduced crime, although some evaluations are currently under way.

Evaluations of similar programs in other states have not found conclusive evidence that community-based models are generally effective at preventing crime. However, there is evidence that some types of programs are promising and additional research should be pursued. These programs include gang offender monitoring by the community, community-based mentor programs, and after-school recreation programs. Programs that have been found to be ineffective include community mobilization against crime programs, particularly neighborhood watch programs in high-crime inner city areas.

Program Components Are Key to Success or Failure. While California’s community crime prevention programs may share some characteristics with effective crime prevention models, much of their success or failure will be affected by the characteristics of the individual program. Consider, for example, recreation programs, which are widely used in community crime prevention and which are intended to reduce risk factors of associating with delinquent peers. Recreation programs which differ in size, location, specific activities, and levels of staff supervision can yield very different outcomes. As an example, research

has indicated that the Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs, which offer intensive activities in such things as sports, music, and art have resulted in lower delinquency rates than other recreation programs that offer minimal services. Thus, unless recreation programs closely follow a model that has been shown to be effective, success will be uncertain. We would note also that since California’s community-based programs are administered by a mix of nine different state agencies, there is not uniformity in adherence to proven program models.

This observation—that program components are key to success—applies equally to other types of programs beyond community programs.

Family Programs

Families are often the most important social group in an individual’s life. Research has found that factors such as high poverty, poor health, and family instability can result in lower self-control, cognitive ability, and societal relationships. In turn, these can increase an individual’s likelihood of engaging in criminal activity. Reducing an individual’s risk factors can lower the incidence of future criminal activity among parents and children. Examples of family-based crime prevention programs include:

- ◆ Parenting classes that provide parents of at-risk youth with support to reduce child abuse and delinquency.
- ◆ Domestic violence shelters that provide safety and services to battered women and their children.

- ◆ Home visitation programs in which nurses visit a child's home regularly, provide support services, and monitor the child's development.

California funds four programs in four different departments that support family-based crime prevention at an annual cost of \$87 million. These programs focus on reducing violence in the home and providing support for parents of at-risk youth.

Research Findings. Evaluations of programs in other states have found that several types of family-based programs are effective at preventing crime. These programs include home visiting by nurses and teachers for children under the age of five, as well as family therapy and parent training for at-risk preadolescents. In addition, there is evidence that some types of programs are promising and should be pursued with additional research. For example, battered women's shelters have had some effect in reducing repeat victimization rates for women who take action beyond staying at the shelter.

California's programs have not been evaluated to determine whether the funded activities have actually reduced crime. However, these programs have been modeled on programs that have been shown to be effective elsewhere. One of the problems with evaluating family-based programs is that the effects may not be observed until years after participants leave the program. For example, the effect of parenting classes for teen mothers may not be realized until their own children reach adolescence. In addition, as stated previously,

some programs based on sound models may yield weak effects due to outside factors such as neighborhood crime and poverty. Therefore, long-term evaluations of new and existing family-based programs would help determine whether programs should be expanded or discontinued.

School Programs

Schools can be a useful environment for reducing the incidence of juvenile crime, because they employ trained child professionals who have regular access to children during their developmental years. Schools, guided by the philosophy that criminal behavior is learned, use a variety of educational and noneducational approaches and programs to address crime. Examples of school-based programs include:

- ◆ Conflict resolution programs in which students are taught alternative skills to violence which they can use to resolve problems.
- ◆ Drug education programs that teach students the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and life skills they can use to respond to peer pressure.
- ◆ School organization and management programs in which students are organized into smaller groups to facilitate management and reduce behavior problems.

California funds 14 programs in five different departments that support school-based crime prevention at an annual cost of \$191 million.



Research Findings. In California, several school program models have been widely used. However, a general lack of outcome data makes it difficult to determine which programs work and which do not. In addition, some programs that have been well evaluated have not been shown to be effective. For example, several gang violence programs are funded by the state, but there is no evidence that indicates which of these programs are effective in reducing juvenile delinquency. Consequently, schools may be using funds to support activities that do not prevent as much crime as other more effective programs.

Many California school districts have implemented several prevention programs concurrently without knowing the impact of individual programs on crime. Information from evaluations would enable schools to determine the impact of each activity on crime and use their limited resources more cost-effectively. Evaluations of school-based programs in other states have found that several programs, such as programs to promote self control and problem-solving skills, are effective at preventing crime. In addition, there is evidence that some types of programs, such as “schools within schools,” which group students into smaller units, and improved classroom management and instructional techniques, are promising and additional research should be pursued.

Criminal Justice Programs

A basic principle of crime prevention is to prevent individuals from initially engaging in criminal activity. Preventing existing offenders

from committing new crimes in the future can also significantly reduce the level of crime in the community. In contrast to the proactive programs profiled in previous sections, crime prevention programs operated by criminal justice agencies are generally reactive in that participants don’t reach the program until they have already committed a crime. Examples of criminal justice crime prevention programs include:

- ◆ Rehabilitation programs such as drug treatment or anger management for populations that are incarcerated or under community supervision.
- ◆ Community supervision in which offenders are monitored closely and provided with support services so that they do not reoffend.
- ◆ Residential programs in rural settings, in which wilderness, challenge, or counseling programs are used to teach discipline.

California funds nine programs that support criminal justice agency prevention programs at an annual cost of about \$115 million.

Research Findings. Evaluations have found that several criminal justice programs, such as focused rehabilitation programs for adult and juvenile offenders and drug treatment in prison, may be effective at preventing recidivism. In addition, there is evidence that some programs such as drug courts, intensive supervision, and aftercare of minor juvenile offenders are promising and additional research should be pursued.

Programs based on these models have been implemented in California, but there is limited information about their impacts on recidivism. Due to variation in actual implementation, outcome results from individual programs are needed. Specifically, policymakers need information about which programs are the most cost-effective at reducing recidivism, and should be replicated with state funding.

Although few of California's criminal justice prevention programs have been evaluated, three programs administered by the Board of Corrections include evaluation plans that should yield outcome results when the programs are completed. These programs are the Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Challenge Grant, the Mentally Ill Offender Grant, and the Repeat Offenders Prevention Project.

KEY ELEMENTS OF WELL-DESIGNED CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

There are a number of different ways to determine the effectiveness of crime prevention programs. The best way is to compare the level of criminal activity for individuals who participated in the prevention program with a similar group that did not participate in the program. There are other measures of program effectiveness that are less conclusive, but nevertheless suggestive of effectiveness. These include changes in crime risk factors such as school performance, economic stability, and family functioning.

Since these types of data are rarely collected in state-funded crime prevention programs, anecdotal evidence often provides the only indication of program effectiveness. However, anecdotal evidence is usually not collected in conjunction with supporting quantitative data, limiting its value. Without performance data, it is not possible to compile a well-defined list of effective crime prevention programs in California.

In the absence of good performance data, how should policymakers decide which crime prevention program to fund? For the purposes of this report, we have constructed a list of organizational and structural elements that appear to be common to well-designed crime prevention programs. These elements, which are summarized in Figure 3 (see page 10), fall into six categories:

- ◆ Defining the problem.
- ◆ Funding.
- ◆ Program design.
- ◆ Implementation.
- ◆ Evaluation.
- ◆ Long-term value assessment.

We discuss each of these areas in further detail below.



Figure 3

Characteristics of Well-Designed Crime Prevention Programs



Problem Definition

- Address a specific problem identified by a needs assessment.



Funding Mechanism

- Use a competitive grant process.
- Require local government financial support.
- Make future funding dependent on program outcomes.
- Make funding dependent on adherence to stated criteria.



Program Design

- Utilize “successful components” of similar pilot programs.
- Focus on a targeted population.
- Establish realistic short-term and long-term goals for each program component.
- Encourage collaboration between existing agencies and community institutions.



Implementation

State responsibilities:

- Define the program purpose and expectations.
- Provide technical assistance.
- Oversee local and statewide program evaluation.

Local responsibilities:

- Be accountable to the state agency for carrying out the program.
- Should have experience in managing similar programs effectively.
- Solicit “buy-in” from the local community (families, target population, etc.).



Evaluation

- Have evaluation plan in place prior to program implementation.
- Require scientifically-valid design that uses well-defined and targeted outcome measures.
- Establish a credible evaluation team.



Value to Future Programs

- Provide a flexible program model that permits replication.
- Distribute information so that the program can be replicated in other areas.

Defining the Problem. An effective crime prevention program requires a clear definition of the specific problem to be addressed. A crime profile should be created that reflects the extent and nature of crime in a particular area, including information on the number and types of crimes committed, and the characteristics of offenders and victims. Programs that focus on a well-defined problem will be in a better position to target resources to a particular population, as well as address identified needs on a priority basis. In order to target state funding to appropriate crime prevention areas, funds should be allocated to programs based on a thorough assessment of public safety and related needs.

Funding. While the amount of funding a program receives is important, how that money is distributed creates incentives which can affect program effectiveness. California generally uses three different mechanisms to fund crime prevention programs: (1) competitive grants awarded to local governments, (2) noncompetitive grants to local governments which are determined by population formulas, and (3) programs funded and implemented directly by state agencies.

Although no particular funding structure *guarantees* program effectiveness, competitive grant programs are likely to generate better results than noncompetitive funding structures. This is because a competitive grant process provides an incentive for program applicants to make a strong case for program needs in their area and to demonstrate that the program has the support of local stakeholders. Noncompetitive grants could result in

prevention programs being implemented in areas that do not have a need for the program or in individual grants being too small to have any significant impact on the targeted crime. Programs that are administered and implemented at the state level may benefit from centralized control, but are less likely to be targeted to meet the needs of individual communities.

In our view, local governments should be required to match a portion of the program cost. This not only demonstrates local support, but suggests that programs might be sustainable in the absence of state support. Finally, funding in multi-year programs should be dependent on continued adherence to stated criteria.

Program Design. A well-defined program includes collaboration among existing agencies and service providers. Such collaboration facilitates community support and maximizes available resources to achieve the desired objective. Program designers should begin by using the results of similar programs to decide which "successful" program components should be included. Each program element should have realistic long- and short-term goals. For example, an after-school recreation program might have a long-term goal of reducing juvenile delinquency and a short-term goal of decreasing the number of unsupervised youth in the neighborhood.

Implementation. For a program to be effective, both the administering state agencies and the local service providers need to play a role in implementation. State agencies are responsible for



defining and overseeing the funding program, as well as providing technical assistance to local providers. In contrast, local providers are responsible for the performance of the individual programs. This includes carrying out the program, as well as collecting data on program participants and performing a program evaluation. Since these duties complement each other, it is critical that state and local governments have strong experience in their respective tasks.

Evaluation. Valid program evaluations are important, because how well a program works is critical to determining if additional future funding should be provided. Since there is a limited amount of funding that can be allocated toward prevention, it is important that funds be directed toward the programs which can most effectively reduce crime. Programs with evaluations “built-in”

from the start are better able to target activities toward specific objectives and are able to produce standard outcome measures, which can be used to compare the effectiveness of different prevention programs.

Long-Term Value Assessment. One of the primary objectives of state funding for local crime prevention programs is to support the development of program models that can eventually be replicated in other areas of the state. Programs need to have a thorough design that can, with minor modifications, be replicated and produce similar results.

Figure 4 illustrates these elements of effective crime prevention programs using the existing Juvenile Crime Enforcement Accountability Challenge Government Program as a model.

PROBLEMS WITH CALIFORNIA’S CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

For this report, we evaluated California’s existing crime prevention programs using the above program elements. Our review revealed several problems with California’s crime prevention programs. These problems are summarized in Figure 5 (see page 14) and discussed in further detail below.

Lack of Emphasis on Program Results Reduces Accountability. Local governments and program providers that receive state funds should be, at a

minimum, accountable to the state for financial management and proper use of funds. In addition, program providers should be accountable for achieving specified crime prevention results.

Based on our review, we conclude that accountability varies significantly among California’s crime prevention programs. In some cases, the responsible state agency actively monitors the distribution of funds, develops evaluation designs, and provides significant technical assistance to

Figure 4**Case Study: Juvenile Crime Enforcement Accountability Challenge Grant Program**

In 1996, the California Legislature established the Juvenile Crime Enforcement Accountability Challenge Grant Program (Chapter 133, Statutes of 1996), a five-year, \$50 million demonstration program aimed at helping counties identify and implement locally developed strategies for responding to juvenile crime and delinquency. An additional \$60 million in funding was added in 1998. The program, administered by the Board of Corrections, targets services to at-risk youth and young offenders between the ages of 11 and 17. Programs involve the youths' families, emphasizing the use of multiple interventions based on a thorough evaluation of various need and risk factors.

Problem Definition

- Juvenile justice needs assessments were conducted in 53 counties. Results from the assessments were used as the basis for applying for the demonstration grants.
- Program selection criteria included size of high-risk youth population.

Funding Mechanism

- Demonstration grants totaling \$45.7 million were awarded on a competitive basis. Counties were required to provide 25 percent matching funds.
- Program selection criteria included a demonstrated history of maximizing funding sources and the likelihood that the program would continue after state funding ended.

Program Design

- Program selection criteria included demonstrated abilities to implement a collaborative plan.
- Each county was required to establish a coordinating council that included representatives from county probation, sheriff's office, district attorney's office, social services office, a nonprofit community based organization, and the county office of education.

Implementation

- Program selection criteria included demonstrated abilities to administer the program, provide and develop a continuum of responses to juvenile crime, and to implement a multi-county juvenile justice program.
- Administering state agency provides significant technical support and coordination services.

Evaluation

- Most selected programs are using a scientific (experimental or quasi-experimental) evaluation design to determine effectiveness of their services.
- Programs must include information sharing systems to assist coordination and data collection.
- Programs must include identified goals relating to outcome measures. Common outcome measures include rate of juvenile arrests, rate of success in completing probation, and rate of successful completion of restitution and court-ordered service responsibilities.
- Board of Corrections developed a research design for assessing the overall effectiveness of the grant program.

Value to Future Programs

- Each selected program has a particular target population and intervention strategy. These demonstration programs are all being evaluated in a similar manner.
- Programs were selected on the basis of potential for replication.



grant recipients. In these cases, there is an emphasis on both fiscal accountability as well as programmatic results.

More commonly, however, the state agency's role is limited to simply distributing funds for use at the local level. As a consequence, the level of reporting required, both financial and programmatic, for local recipients of these funds can vary significantly depending on the program. This variation in evaluation and reporting requirements across programs frequently means that the results from a program do not play a significant role in determining future funding levels.

The failure to use program results information to make funding decisions has two important consequences. First, some programs that are not particularly effective are continued, instead of using those monies to support more promising approaches to crime prevention. Second, to the extent that program results have little or no effect on future funding for a program, there is no incentive for local providers to improve their crime prevention programs. The net effect is a lack of clear accountability between recipients of funds at the local level and administering

state agencies, which in turn are accountable to the Legislature.

Lack of Information About Crime Prevention Effectiveness. In order to make sound decisions about crime prevention programs, the Legislature needs evaluative information that describes how well a program is working and whether it meets the state's crime prevention objectives. Evaluative information can be used to determine:

- ◆ If the overall program objectives were achieved.
- ◆ Whether each element of the program did or did not work.
- ◆ Whether funds expended were done so efficiently and obtained the best value.

Figure 5
Problems With California Crime Prevention Programs

- ✓ **Lack of Emphasis on Results Reduces Accountability**
 - As a consequence, future funding allocations provide no incentive for local providers to improve crime prevention programs.
- ✓ **Lack of Program Effectiveness Information**
 - This means that policymakers are unable to target crime prevention resources based on past program performance.
- ✓ **Multiple State Programs with Similar Services**
 - Operating many similar programs out of different agencies duplicates effort and reduces the benefits from economies of scale.

- ◆ Whether any lessons learned in the implementation of the program should be shared with others facing similar problems.

Evaluative information collected at the local level would also be useful to program providers and local governments for improving and expanding their own programs.

However, this information generally has not been available for a number of reasons. Crime prevention program legislation often permits, but does not explicitly require the administering state agency to use a portion of the funds for an evaluation of the programs. In some cases, there has been a lack of sufficient funding and expertise to conduct useful evaluation. Even when evaluations are conducted, they tend to vary in scope and sophistication, with few of them adequately evaluating the impact of the program on participants. In addition, differences in evaluation methodology and the lack of comparable data make it difficult to compare results from multiple state programs with the same objective. Finally, the time frame over which performance data are collected, typically less than five years, may be inadequate to capture long-term program outcomes.

Unfortunately, even when good program evaluation information is available, it is not consistently used to modify program design and funding. For example, although multiple studies have shown that the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program does not reduce substance abuse, the program continues to receive funding through various state programs.

Multiple State Programs With Similar Services.

Based on our review of the 41 state crime prevention programs, we conclude that many programs, which are administered by different agencies and departments, provide similar services to similar types of target populations. This increases the likelihood of program duplication and inefficiencies. For example, there are multiple programs that target at-risk/high-risk youth that are authorized to fund counseling services. In addition, there are several programs targeted at juvenile offenders that can provide drug treatment services. Programs may be *authorized* to provide multiple services, but in practice focus resources on one or two services. A resulting scenario could be a community in which several programs offer after school recreation, but no programs offer counseling or mental health services.

Duplicated program service, in and of itself, is not an indication of an ineffective or inefficient program. Similar programs in multiple agencies may offer services to different populations with varying needs. However, multiple programs offering similar services are more likely to result in inefficient and ineffective programs unless the programs are well coordinated. California law requires OCJP to develop a comprehensive statewide plan for improving criminal justice and delinquency prevention activities. An important goal of such a plan would be to ensure that crime prevention programs are well coordinated. However, such a plan does not currently exist. It is not certain why the plan has not been completed, but



it could be due in part to the shift from the office’s statutory focus on criminal justice planning to its

current role as the administrator of federal crime prevention funds.

HOW CAN CALIFORNIA IMPROVE ITS CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS?

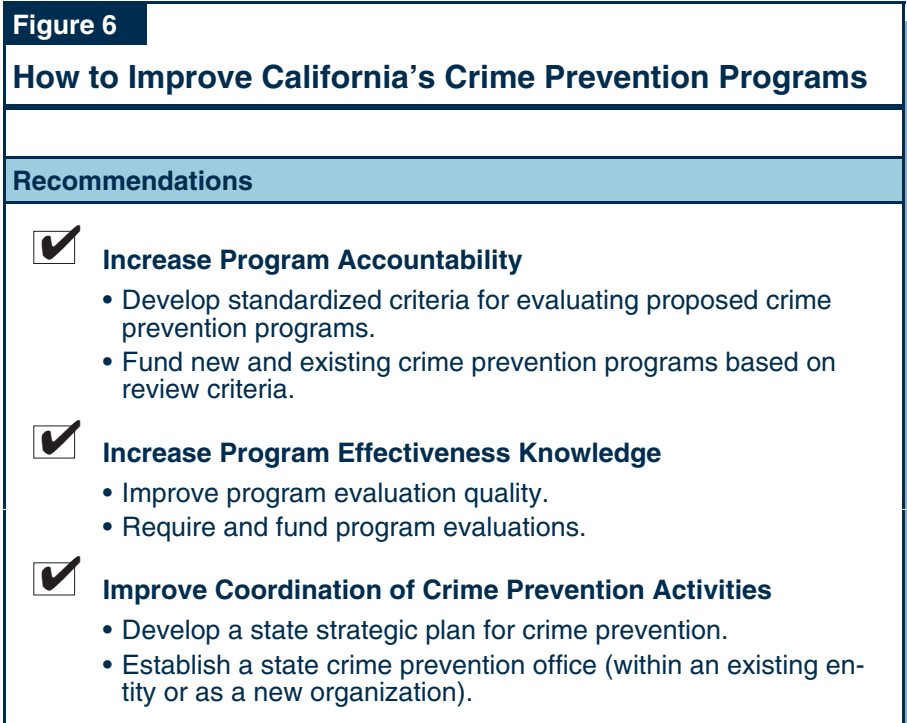
Without better information about which programs work and which don’t, it is difficult for the Legislature to maximize the impact of funds used to meet crime prevention goals. Below, we discuss actions that the Legislature can take to address the problems outlined in the previous section. (These actions are summarized in Figure 6.)

Increase Program Accountability

Develop Standardized Review Criteria. To facilitate the comparison of programs operating with different objectives, target groups, and institutional settings, we recommend the development of a standardized set of criteria that can be used by the Legislature or local governments when reviewing proposed crime prevention programs. The criteria should reflect the elements of well-designed programs discussed above (see Figure 3). Regardless of the individual elements that are considered, the broad

policy goals of using the review criteria should be to:

- ◆ Encourage local governments to assess their own crime prevention needs.
- ◆ Establish realistic expectations about the capacity of programs to fulfill the Legislature’s crime prevention objectives.



- ◆ Promote accountability and results-based programming by local providers.

Allocate Funding Based on Satisfaction of Criteria. A crime prevention program's funding level should depend on how well it satisfies the review criteria presented in Figure 3. New programs should meet all of the new criteria to receive funding and if possible, existing programs should be modified so that they meet more of the criteria. Emphasis should be placed on replication of programs that meet the criteria but have been shown to be effective in other jurisdictions. Funding should also be redirected away from programs that meet few of the criteria to programs that meet more of the criteria.

Increase Crime Prevention Program Knowledge

Improving Program Evaluations. A number of promising crime prevention program models have been identified, but research is needed to determine the effectiveness of specific programs. For example, there is some evidence that certain school program models developed in other states can reduce juvenile delinquency. However, without evaluations of actual programs implemented in California, it is difficult to determine if these programs are effective and worth continued funding, given California's demographic differences.

In the past, state agencies have satisfied the evaluation requirement of crime prevention programs by conducting *process* evaluations, which examined only internal operating proce-

dures. However, *impact* evaluations should be conducted in order to determine whether a program as a whole has achieved the desired outcome. It is desirable that such evaluations use control and experimental groups (one group receives services, the other does not), rigorous sampling techniques, longitudinal assessment, and the collection of data on impact and outcome measures.

Many crime prevention programs, while similar in overall content, may differ in the particular details of the services provided and populations served. Consequently, research should not only focus on assessing the overall effectiveness of the programs, but also attempt to determine common elements of effective programs. These elements can be combined in new ways to modify proven program models to meet the needs of different populations.

Improving the quality of evaluations will have at least two benefits. First, it will allow the Legislature to determine which programs work and which ones don't. Second, it would be a useful step toward increasing the use of research findings in program design. If a program is shown to be effective, this information should be shared with program providers for appropriate incorporation into their programs.

Require and Fund Crime Prevention Program Evaluations. Although current law requires an evaluation for several existing crime prevention programs, such a requirement *and* funding to conduct the evaluations should generally be



included for all crime prevention programs. However, programs which have already been proven to be effective, may only require monitoring to ensure that they are implemented in the same manner as past successful programs. To meet these evaluation goals, a certain percentage of all crime prevention funds should be allocated for impact evaluation, and statutes should clearly outline the elements to be included in the evaluation such as outcome measures and acceptable types of evaluation designs. Programs that have been proven to be ineffective in impact evaluations should not be funded.

Coordinate State Crime Prevention Activities

California's existing system of crime prevention programs, which consists of multiple programs being administered by several state departments and agencies, results in inefficiencies. For example, there is no central agency that traces and accesses the types of services and funding available for crime prevention programs. Also, the quality of technical assistance and program oversight provided to local governments differs depending on the administering state agency. As a result, the impact of these programs on crime may be much smaller than what could have been achieved with a coordinated and targeted crime prevention effort.

Increasing state coordination of crime prevention programs would promote:

- ◆ Efficient identification, tracking, and reporting of state crime prevention initiatives.

- ◆ Interagency collaboration and reduction in duplication of program efforts.
- ◆ Increased accessibility and coordination of resources by local communities.
- ◆ Increased access of service providers and local communities to information regarding other projects in their geographic and/or subject area.
- ◆ Increased performance accountability of local providers to the state, since future funding would be dependent on past performance.

Develop State Strategic Plan for Crime Prevention. One of the first steps toward improving the coordination of crime prevention programs is to establish a strategic plan. Such a plan would serve as a mechanism for establishing the state's crime prevention priorities and guidelines for crime prevention resource allocation. The plan should:

- ◆ Identify California's long-term crime prevention goals.
- ◆ Describe how authorized crime prevention programs will meet those goals through their activities.
- ◆ Layout coordination activities that will occur among various state agencies administering crime prevention programs.

Establish a State Crime Prevention Office. To facilitate the implementation of the state crime prevention plan, we recommend that the Legislature establish a state crime prevention office. This

office could be established within a department that is currently administering a crime prevention program or as a stand-alone office. The functions of the new office should be set out in statute to include the following functions:

- ◆ Oversee the development and implementation of the state crime prevention strategic plan.
- ◆ Administer prevention program grants to ensure that funds are distributed in accordance with crime prevention objectives.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to local service providers in areas such as using scientific research to develop programs, conducting program evaluations, and accessing supplemental funding sources.

- ◆ Collect information on crime prevention programs (both federal and state-funded programs). This information should be collected on an ongoing basis, and then periodically disseminated in order to establish a baseline to be used in creating crime prevention standards. Information collected should include (1) “blueprints” for replication and (2) projected levels of effectiveness as demonstrated by evaluations.
- ◆ Ensure sufficient resources are set aside to oversee and conduct valid program impact evaluations.

We think consolidating crime prevention program administrative funds into a single office would result in benefits from increased economies of scale.

CONCLUSION

We recommend several actions (summarized in Figure 6), the Legislature can take to increase the effectiveness of state crime prevention spending and provide a more coordinated state approach to managing crime prevention programs. Of these

actions, we think it is fundamentally important for the Legislature to utilize a standard set of criteria when allocating crime prevention funding. This is needed to ensure that state crime prevention resources are allocated toward effective programs.



Appendix

California Crime Prevention Programs

(Dollars in Millions)

Agency and Program	Expenditures		Institutional Setting
	1999-00	2000-01 ^a	
Board of Corrections			
Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Challenge Grant	\$36.8	\$48.2	c
Mentally Ill Offender Grant Program	6.3	6.7	j
Repeat Offenders Prevention Project	4.2	12.4	j
Subtotals	(\$47.3)	(\$67.3)	
California Youth Authority			
Gang Violence Reduction Program	\$1.0	\$1.0	c
Young Men as Fathers/Mentoring	1.0	1.0	f
Youth Center and Shelter	19.6	5.4	c
Subtotals	(\$21.6)	(\$7.4)	
Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs			
California Mentor Initiative	\$1.9	\$1.9	c
Drug Courts	8.0	10.0	j
Friday Night Live	1.6	1.6	c
Law Enforcement/Education Partnerships and Gang Violence	2.5	2.5	s
Subtotals	(\$14.0)	(\$16.0)	
Department of Community Services and Development			
California Mentor Program	\$2.0	\$2.0	c
Subtotals	(\$2.0)	(\$2.0)	
Department of Education			
Conflict Resolution and Youth Mediation	\$0.3	\$0.3	s
Gang Risk Intervention Program (GRIP)	3.0	3.0	s
High-Risk Youth Education and Public Safety	18.0	18.0	s
Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act	39.6	41.1	s
School Community Policing Program	10.0	10.0	s
School Community Violence Prevention Program	0.7	0.7	s
School Safety and Violence Prevention Act	101.0	72.1	s
School Law/Enforcement Partnership mini-grants/planning	0.6	0.6	s
Safety Plans for New Schools	—	3.0	s
Subtotals	(\$173.2)	(\$148.8)	
Department of Health Services, Maternal Child Health Branch			
Domestic Violence Prevention	\$23.1	\$23.0	f
Subtotals	(\$23.1)	(\$23.0)	

Continued

Agency and Program	Expenditures		Institutional Setting
	1999-00	2000-01 ^a	
Department of Justice			
California Gang Violence Prevention Partnership	\$3.0	—	c
Subtotals	(\$3.0)	(—)	
Department of Mental Health			
Children's System of Care	\$26.4	\$26.4	f
Conditional Release	16.3	17.2	j
Early Mental Health Initiative	15.0	20.0	s
Mental Health Funding for Homeless and Parolees (AB 34)	10.0	20.0	c
Subtotals	(\$67.7)	(\$83.6)	
Department of Social Services			
Child Abuse Prevention	\$36.6	\$36.6	f
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for Probation Services	32.7	32.7	j
Subtotals	(\$69.3)	(\$69.3)	
Employment Development Department			
At-Risk Youth Demonstration Project	\$2.0	—	c
Subtotals	(\$2.0)	(—)	
Military Department			
Various youth programs	\$6.2	\$16.4	s
Subtotals	(\$6.2)	(\$16.4)	
Office of Criminal Justice Planning			
Community Crime Resistance	\$0.9	\$0.9	c
Community Delinquency Prevention	2.5	2.3	c
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)	1.0	—	s
Domestic Violence	8.3	8.2	c
Gang Violence Suppression Program	6.6	6.6	c
Innovative Local Law Enforcement/Community Policing	2.5	1.1	j
Juvenile Accountability Incentive Account	21.8	21.8	j
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	8.1	6.3	j
Residential Substance Abuse Treatment	6.5	6.5	j
Suppression of Drug Abuse in Schools	3.3	3.3	s
Subtotals	(\$61.5)	(\$57.0)	
Office of Planning and Research (Office of the Secretary for Education)			
Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program	\$10.0	\$10.0	c
Subtotals	(\$10.0)	(\$10.0)	
Totals, Prevention Funding	\$500.9	\$500.8	

c = community f = family s = school j = criminal justice

^a At the time this report was completed, a bill to provide \$121 million for local juvenile justice programs was pending in the Legislature.





Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Yvonne Choong, under the supervision of Craig Cornett. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) is a nonpartisan office which provides fiscal and policy information and advice to the Legislature.



LAO Publications

To request publications call (916) 445-2375. This report and others, as well as an E-mail subscription service, are available on the LAO's Internet site at www.lao.ca.gov. The LAO is located at 925 L Street, Suite 1000, Sacramento, CA 95814.