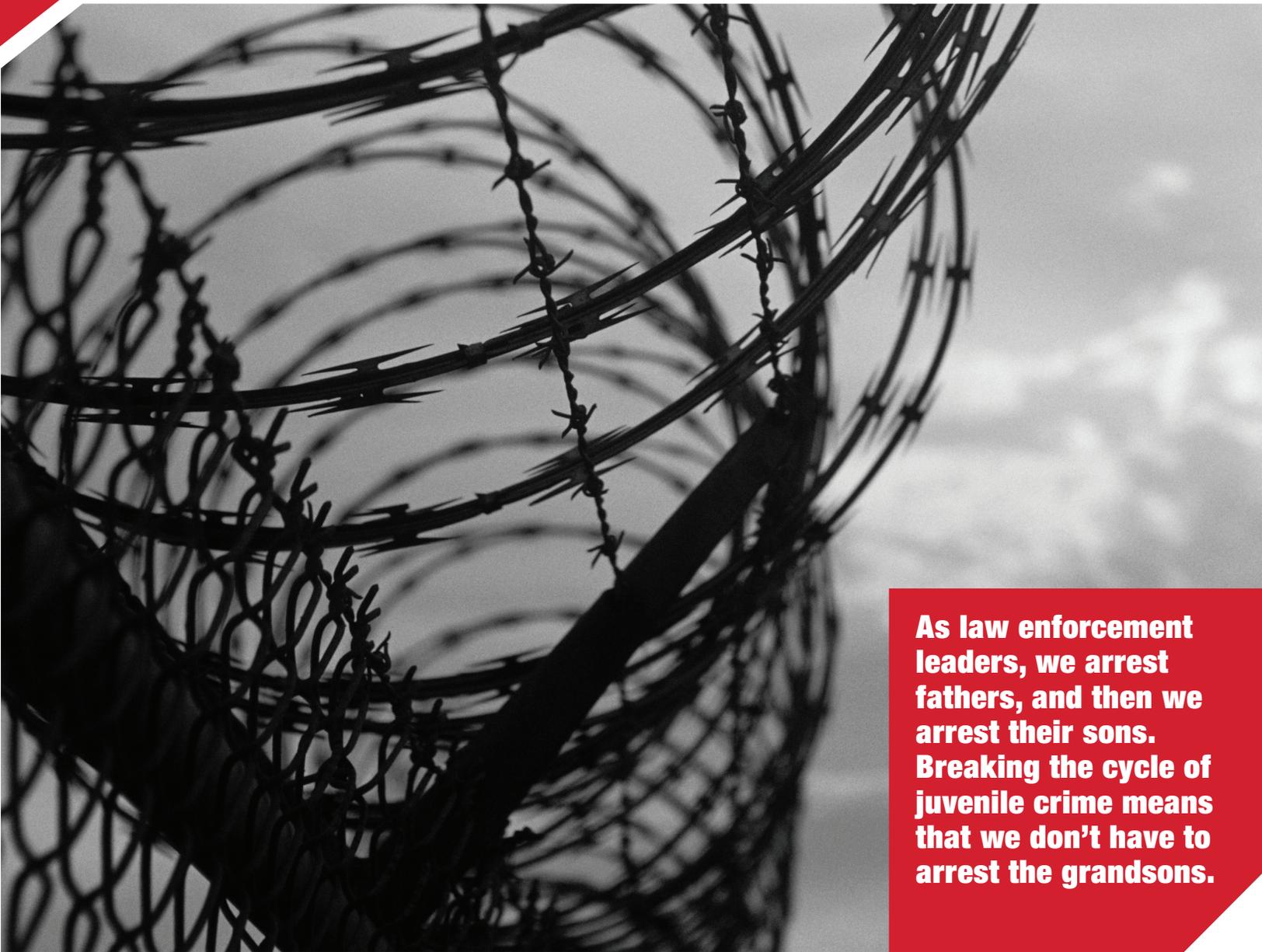


NEVER IS BETTER BUT ONCE IS ENOUGH

**The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Can
Help States Reduce Crime and Save Taxpayer Dollars**



**As law enforcement
leaders, we arrest
fathers, and then we
arrest their sons.
Breaking the cycle of
juvenile crime means
that we don't have to
arrest the grandsons.**



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Acknowledgments

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a bi-partisan anti-crime organization of nearly 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, state attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors nationwide. Our members believe that the best way to prevent crime is to help parents and our communities give kids the right start in life.

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Never Is Better, but Once Is Enough

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act can help states reduce crime, protect public safety and save taxpayer dollars

Never is better: For almost two decades, the 5,000 law enforcement leaders of *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* have championed investments that keep youth from becoming involved in the criminal justice system as juveniles and adults.

But once is enough: Today we are stepping up efforts to stop those who commit a crime from continuing to do more harm—and halt the cycle of crime from one generation to the next.

That's why we're supporting the reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA). The JJJPA will encourage communities to make smart use of taxpayer dollars by engaging juvenile offenders in programs proven to help steer them away from a life of crime.

The Current Landscape: Juvenile Offenders

Placing juvenile offenders in residential facilities with other troubled youths is expensive and, in most cases, not particularly effective at reducing crime.

Our current situation is unsustainable.

- Every year, taxpayers spend more than \$5 billion to keep juvenile offenders in facilities.¹
- There were over 100,000 youths placed in facilities for at least some period of time in 2010. A year of custody costs an average of \$88,000 per juvenile.²
- National recidivism data for juveniles does not exist, but in Washington state, for example, over half of 15- to 17-year-olds with a delinquency disposition already had at least one on their record.³



What we do now is costly:

Juvenile custody averages \$88,000 a year vs. \$61,000 for tuition, room and board at Harvard.

It isn't working:

In a natural experiment, juvenile offenders in custody later dropped out of school more often and committed more adult crimes than those not in custody.

Family coaching efforts work better in most cases:

Rigorous coaching for the most serious offenders and their families cuts crime in half or more compared to placing them with other troubled youth.

And they save money:

Family coaching efforts save \$9,000 to \$27,000 per child served.



“We estimate the present value of saving a 14-year-old high risk juvenile from a life of crime to range from \$2.6 to \$5.3 million.”

—Mark Cohen, Vanderbilt University, and Alex Piquero, University of Dallas, (2009)

Mixing first-time and repeat offenders is usually a bad move.

Research shows it’s smarter to keep first-time offenders with few risk factors away from youths who have committed more serious or frequent crimes. This prevents them from learning more problematic behaviors and becoming typecast as delinquents.⁴ As one of our Fight Crime: Invest in Kids members, Sheriff Gabriel Morgan, Sr. of Newport News, Virginia explained, “Juvenile facilities should be reserved for kids we are afraid of, not just mad at.”

Community services for juveniles who commit minor delinquencies and family coaching for the few, more serious offenders is more effective than custody in most cases.

Engaging less serious juvenile offenders in interventions such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters that focus on behavior change is far more effective at reducing re-offending than custody. The same is true of interventions for more serious offenders that coach them and their parents on ways to change the youths’ behaviors. These programs also work with teachers, athletic coaches and/or other community members to reinforce these positive influences. Randomized trials have proven that such **rigorous family-coaching programs can cut re-offending in half or more compared to the usual out-of-home placements.**⁵

For the very few serious offenders who need residential placement, it is not the endgame—we need to rehabilitate them, too.

A natural experiment showed that youth in custody later dropped out of school more often and committed more adult crimes than those not in custody.⁶ But other research shows the very few, most serious offenders do commit fewer crimes when they’re sent to residential facilities (see Figure 1).⁷ Even if they are placed in facilities, these youth still need services while they are in the facilities and when they return home to reduce the risk they will re-offend and eventually end up in adult prisons.

Reauthorizing JJPDA Could Reduce Juvenile, Adult Crime

The JJPDA could encourage communities to continue backing away from simply sending offenders away from home, and provide funding for interventions with a proven impact on reducing recidivism among the types of offenders below.

Youth who need some guidance but have not committed serious offenses can benefit from community programs.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentoring: Research shows the program reduced the number of days youth skipped school by **half**, the number who admitted they **hit someone by one-third**, and the number who initiated drug use by **40 percent**.⁹

Chicago summer jobs program for inner-city high school students: A study found that participants had **43 percent fewer violent crime arrests** than youth randomly assigned to not participate.¹⁰

Juvenile offenders inclined toward aggression can benefit from evidence-based coaching.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a low-cost, short-term coaching program for youth with aggressive or disruptive behaviors. ART teaches these youths interpersonal, anger management and social problem-solving skills that can be used in many different settings. A Washington state study found that, when delivered correctly, **ART cut felony convictions within 18 months by 24 percent.**¹¹

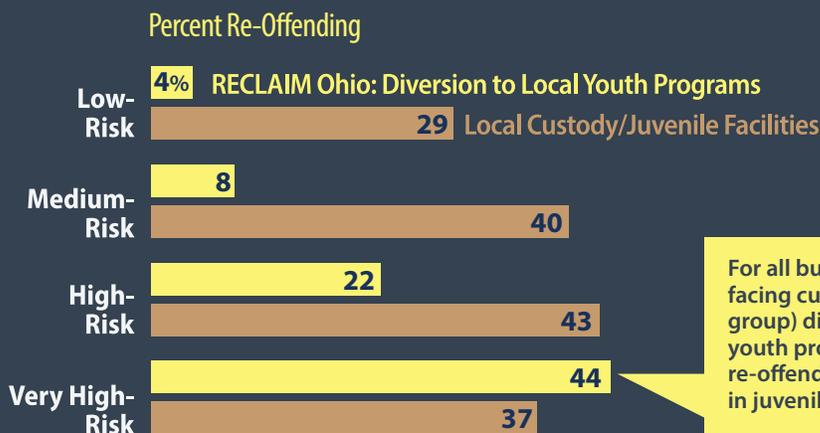
Figure 1

Landmark Study of Juvenile Re-Offending

Diversion to local, effective youth programs reduced the rate of re-offending more than placement in juvenile facilities for most juvenile offenders.



Edward Latessa is an expert on cutting recidivism who has consulted in 45 states and was one of the authors of this landmark study.



For all but 9 percent of the juveniles facing custody (the very high-risk group) diversion to local, effective youth programs reduced the rate of re-offending more than placement in juvenile facilities.

Note: While the data in this graph only refers to diversions from local custody, similar results were achieved by diverting youth from state custody.

Source: Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005. Other Reclaim studies confirm these results

More serious juvenile offenders benefit from proven family coaching.

Too often parents don't know what to do to get their troubled adolescent back on track. Research shows that hard-nosed coaching for parents on how to reinforce positive behaviors while sanctioning bad ones is **more effective at reducing crime than sending offenders to an out-of-home facility.**

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) provides eight to 30 hours of coaching to parents and youth together on skills that help them replace negative behaviors with positive ones. In one study, **FFT cut re-arrests in half**, and in another, participating youth were **one-fourth as likely to be placed outside their home for later crimes.**¹²

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) provides 60 hours of coaching for more serious youth offenders and their parents, and also focuses on reaching their teachers, coaches and/or others in their community to reinforce positive behaviors. In one randomized trial, a 22-year follow-up showed **troubled youth**

who did not receive MST were three and a half times more likely to be arrested for a violent felony than those who did.¹³

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) is an alternative to residential placement for seriously troubled youth who cannot stay with their parents. It instead places them in a home with specially-trained foster parents for six to nine months. While the youths receive coaching from their foster parents and counselors, their own parents receive training on how to guide their children away from destructive behaviors when they return home. According to a randomized trial, **boys in MTFC were six times less likely to be re-arrested than those not in the program.**¹⁴

Even if youth are placed out-of-home, ART or other Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based approaches can be effective while youth are in facilities. And once the youths return home, family therapies can improve their chances of avoiding a life of crime.

How Effective Family Coaching Turns Lives Around

Turning around the lives of troubled youth takes well-designed, well-tested and well-implemented programs. Key to this is training those around troubled youths to direct them to better behavior.¹⁵ The Multisystemic Therapy (MST) website highlights “Andrew,” a troubled youth who lost touch with his absent parents and was living with his grandmother. He was fighting with his sister, facing a long-term school suspension and about to face increased supervision for delinquent behavior. His grandmother was looking for an out-of-home placement for him.

Instead, he was referred to MST. “Previously, Andrew’s grandmother gave him privileges in response to his

aggression, either to calm him down or to pre-empt his behavior.” Now, she was being trained in effective parenting techniques, including using access to TV and other electronics to encourage positive behaviors.

“Andrew’s grandmother and the school staff, with support from MST [coaches], agreed to a behavior plan that ... linked meaningful incentives and consequences that no longer included out-of-school suspension [which had only reinforced his acting out].” Andrew’s grades improved, he participated in more activities and was discharged from probation.¹⁶

Source: MST website (<http://info.mstservices.com/blog/mst-treatment-saves-child>)

How JJDPA Can Save Money

Confining juveniles costs an average of \$88,000 a year—more than the \$61,000 annual cost of tuition, room and board at Harvard.¹⁷ In total, taxpayers spend over \$5 billion a year to place youths in facilities.¹⁸ Solid research, however, shows expensive custody can usually be avoided by using family coaching or aggression prevention efforts to cut crime more effectively.¹⁹ Economists at the *Washington State Institute for Public Policy*—a state agency—have done extensive analysis of the data: for most juvenile offenders at risk of out-of-home placement, these programs almost always deliver better, cheaper results than sending kids away (see Figure 2).²⁰

Conclusion

We need to do what we can to prevent kids from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system in the first place. But for the kids who do become involved, we need to make sure we provide the right services to the right youth and ensure those programs are performing as promised.

If we can do that, there will be fewer young people continuing down the path to adult crimes and adult prison. “Never is better, but once is enough.”

Figure 2

Serious Family Coaching Efforts Cut Crime by Half or More And Save Money

		Net Savings/Child
Functional Family Therapy	FFT	\$27,000
Multisystematic Therapy	MST	\$16,000
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care	MTFC	\$9,000



Steve Aos is an economist who helped Washington state avoid \$250 million in new prison construction and operating costs.

Source: Washington Institute for Public Policy.

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