

Talking Points for Presentation to Little Hoover Commission
On
Cost Effective Violence Prevention Programs Targeted at Youth
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June 22, 2000

1. Youth who are at-risk for violent behavior are usually at risk for many other problem behaviors, including drug use, delinquency and school dropout.
2. Most violence and delinquency prevention programs are never adequately evaluated.
3. Different research groups have conducted a number of comprehensive and rigorous reviews of the intervention literature over the past decade. The University of Colorado Blueprints and the University of Maryland “What Works” reports are among the best. The findings across these studies are generally consistent.
4. Only a relatively small number of programs (10-12) have been able to show consistently positive effects in reducing violent behavior and other problem behaviors as well. Another 10 or so appear promising on the basis of a single study, or very short-term results.
5. The positive impacts achieved by some of these programs is substantial – reductions of 50% or more in problem behaviors. The evaluation literature is clear that most interventions do not achieve these large impacts.
6. The successful programs tend to be highly structured, multi-faceted, and expensive.
7. Many of the more effective programs appear to more than pay for themselves in terms of future criminal justice costs avoided. For some the ratio of benefits to costs is more than 10 to 1.
8. Local service providers overwhelmingly prefer to design and develop their own programs, usually building on their existing efforts, rather than replicating a validated program model.
9. Many of the validated programs are prepared to offer detailed training and technical assistance to new adopters.
10. It is up to funders to hold program providers accountable for the effectiveness of their programs by either, ensuring that they adopt validated programs with a high degree of fidelity; or arranging for a rigorous outcome evaluation to assess program impacts.