



Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, Prosecutors, Other
Law Enforcement Leaders, and Violence
Survivors Preventing Crime and Violence

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Benton County Law Enforcement Leaders Champion Early Education As Effective Way to Prevent Crime, Save Money

New report shows early care and education programs must be of high quality to provide best return on investment

RICHLAND, Wash. (Oct. 24, 2012) — Law enforcement leaders unveiled a new report from [FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS](#) today calling on state and federal lawmakers to support high-quality early learning programs as a critical strategy to reduce crime, lower corrections costs and save taxpayers' money. During a visit to the Benton Franklin Head Start, Prosecuting Attorney Andy Miller, Sheriff Steve Keane, Kennewick Chief Ken Hohenberg and Richland Chief Chris Skinner discussed research showing that early care and education must be of high quality to ensure solid, long-term results, including lower crime and tax savings.

"Comparing the cost of corrections to the cost of preschool, we invest just three dimes in early learning for every dollar we spend on lock-up," Chief Skinner said. "We're here to urge our policymakers to ensure we keep supporting high-quality early learning programs here in Washington, so we don't lose an opportunity to steer more kids toward success and away from trouble."

The group called on federal and state policymakers to support efforts to strengthen the quality of early learning and work to ensure that more children have access to these proven crime prevention programs. Currently, only 50 percent of children in low-income families eligible for ECEAP or Head Start are being reached by those programs due to insufficient funding.

Recognizing that Congress and the state legislature must set budget priorities in the face of continuing deficits, the law enforcement leaders urged policymakers to protect—and when possible to increase—funding for Head Start and the state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

The law enforcement leaders warned that unless Congress takes action on major fiscal issues, scheduled cuts mandated by budget "sequesters" could mean as many as 1,400 Washington children will lose their place in Head Start. Similarly, the legislature will be looking for options for closing a projected \$2 billion dollar deficit in the 2013-2015 biennial budget when they convene in January.

"The early years are the critical starting point for ensuring that at-risk children have a better chance to succeed in school and in life. The research is behind it, and so is law enforcement," Chief Hohenberg said. "We hope our leaders in Olympia and in Congress will take note of these findings and make sure we keep the investment in quality early learning."

The leaders noted that Washington is currently spending far more to incarcerate prisoners than to provide early education to young children. In Washington State, taxpayers spend more than \$1 billion a year on corrections. By contrast, Washington spends just a fraction of that on early care and education for young children, \$139 million, and receives \$349 million in federal grants for Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

"Fighting crime can start by investing in the next generation and ensuring that they have early learning opportunities," Sheriff Keane. "The quality of early care and education is the critical ingredient, and we need to make every effort to make sure our Head Start and ECEAP providers and others have the resources they need."

(more)

A long-term study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan tracked disadvantaged children who attended high-quality preschool and a randomized control group of similar children left out. Over the course of nearly 40 years of follow-up, researchers found at age 27, those who had not been in the project were already five times more likely to be chronic lawbreakers with five or more arrests. By age 40, those who did not attend the program were two times more likely to become chronic offenders with more than 10 arrests and 50 percent more likely to be arrested for violent crimes. A cost-benefit analysis found that the Perry program returned to society an average of over \$180,000 per child and provided a potential of \$16 in benefits for every \$1 invested.

“It comes down to dollars and sense: quality early learning saves us dollars and it makes sense. Educating is a lot cheaper than incarcerating,” Prosecuting Attorney Miller said. “The findings of this report should tell our leaders that we need to keep our commitment to providing quality early learning for Washington Kids.”

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[FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS](http://www.fightcrime.org/wa) is a national anti-crime organization of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors with 225 in Washington and over 5,000 members nationwide. For a complimentary copy of our research report and more information, go to www.fightcrime.org/wa.