

crimes committed by juveniles and an alarming rise in abuse, neglect, and street violence perpetrated against American youth. In light of this emerging crisis, we can no longer afford a narrow focus by separate disciplines to attack this problem. To effectively address the rising levels of juvenile crime, participants from all community sectors, public and private, and across specializations, must plan collaboratively and comprehensively to reduce violence and build safer and healthier communities. Collectively, we must launch a two-pronged assault on juvenile delinquency and violence, and their causes. Prevention and early intervention programs, coupled with a strong focus on law enforcement and a comprehensive system of graduated sanctions are crucial to this battle.

The public's fear of youth violence is well founded. Assuming that juvenile violent crime arrest rates increase annually at the rate they have in the past decade, juvenile violent crime arrests would more than double by the year 2010. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports for 1992-1993 show that the greatest increase in arrests of violent offenders involves children under the age of 18. Offenders under the age of 15 show the greatest increase in offenses involving the use of weapons. No place is a haven. Our neighborhoods, our schools and our homes are becoming increasingly violent. In 1992, 1.55 million violent crimes were committed against juveniles age 12 to 17, a 23.4% increase since 1987. The increased use of weapons, particularly firearms, by juveniles has created a climate of fear both for and of our children.

An increased emphasis on law enforcement and corrections has been the most common response to rising levels of juvenile violent crime. Assuredly, our communities have a vital stake in ensuring that serious, violent and chronic offenders are removed from the street. However, providing more detention beds and secure commitment facilities and increasing prosecution of juveniles as adults can only protect our communities in the short term. Such measures alone cannot put an end to youth violence. While we need to take immediate steps to protect our communities today, programs that prevent delinquency and violence tomorrow are the greatest hope for the future.

We must intensify our efforts to prevent delinquency by seeking ways to target services to youth and families at risk and to intervene immediately to hold first time juvenile offenders accountable before they become serious,

violent, or chronic delinquents or graduate to become adult criminals. Working with our communities, we must integrate a system of support for families and children that will help them live in a safe and healthy environment. America's children should awaken each morning in homes that are free of child abuse and neglect; they should attend schools that are free of drugs, gangs, and guns; and after school, they should be able to play in parks that are safe and return to homes that provide a nurturing and supportive atmosphere.

Much of the public debate about juvenile delinquency centers on at-risk youth. If we are to provide early and effective intervention to prevent delinquency, we must begin by more precisely targeting at-risk children and families, but we should not exclude any child who needs services.

The road to adulthood has become increasingly hazardous in our society, and many families have broken apart. We must strengthen and preserve families. In particular, we must help families provide their children with the support that young people need to become productive and law abiding citizens.

If we are serious about combating crime, we must start early to ensure the healthy development of our children. We know that the early years of life are highly significant in a child's development. It is during that period that children learn empathy from caring adults with whom they have secure attachments and develop a sense of trust derived from parental responsiveness and loving attention.

Therefore, it is critical to:

- Offer parents the tools they need to nurture their children effectively, through parent training classes and home visitation programs, including parents of offenders and juvenile offenders who are teen parents.

- Enable children to enter kindergarten ready for school with a chance to succeed, through programs such as Head Start and HIPYPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters).

- Keep students in school, where they can acquire the tools to become self-sufficient through truancy and dropout prevention and intervention programs.

- Give youth a positive alternative to being out on the street and the violence this encourages through after-school activities and conflict resolution programs.

- Provide youth with positive role models through mentoring programs.

There are clear correlations between child abuse and neglect and increased delinquency and violence. A National Institute of Justice study on the cycle of violence reports that childhood abuse and neglect increase the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile and as an adult. The direct connection between violence and child neglect is striking: 12.5 percent of neglected children and 15.8 percent of physically abused children will be arrested for a violent offense by the age of 25. An ongoing OJJDP study on the causes and correlates of delinquency found that adolescents from families in which two or more forms of violence are present (e.g. child and spouse abuse) are almost twice as likely to report committing violent offenses as their peers from nonviolent families.

Thousands of alleged incidents of child abuse and neglect are reported to authorities every day. These reports must be handled within systems that are ill-equipped to properly investigate cases, report adequately to the court, or provide effective protective supervision, appropriate foster care, or timely permanent placement. As a result, children may be harmed by the very systems designed to protect them. The juvenile justice system's inability to properly deal with the deluge of abuse and neglect cases is devastating families.

In addition to manageable caseloads, child protective service workers, investigators, police officers, and others responsible for protecting children need expert training in child development and investigative techniques. This will enable them to gather the information needed to make legal determinations while displaying sensitivity to the child and the family. To effectively manage their cases, court counselors must have sufficient time to get the critical details needed to make appropriate recommendations regarding such matters as placement and future court action. Social workers must have adequate time to work with families, ensure compliance with court orders, and, above all, ensure the safety of children. Monitoring a child's status in foster care and minimizing the trauma of out-of-home placement is a time consuming responsibility. Judges need the time to thoughtfully and thoroughly deliberate in order to render informed decisions that are in the best interests of the child, justice and society. Finally, necessary resources to meet the treatment needs of the child and the family must be available in the community.

The juvenile justice system must also be strengthened if we are to reduce delinquency and juvenile violence.