

# **Youth Violence Prevention Program Year 2 Evaluation (2008)**

**Presented to the Palm Beach County  
Criminal Justice Commission**

**March 23, 2009**

**In Review for the April 28<sup>th</sup> Presentation to  
the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners**

**Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research  
The Florida State University**



**COLLEGE OF CRIMINOLOGY  
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

*Research Brought to Life.*

# 1. Introduction

- In 2007, Palm Beach County began implementing the Youth Violence Prevention Program model in 5 targeted high crime cities.
  
- The program components are:
  - Prevention (4 of 5 sites)
  - Law Enforcement (countywide)
  - Courts (countywide)
  - Corrections (1 site)
  
- What follows are the Year 2 findings of the program's efforts.

## 2. Program Component Services in 2008\*

- The 4 Youth Empowerment Centers provided structured education, employment, and life skills sessions totaling 25,363 for 733 youth in 2008.
  - Law Enforcement – Local law enforcement agencies and the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office increased use of equipment (Bullet Catcher and BrassTrax).
  - Courts – Two prosecutors focused resources on increasing gang-related and violence-related prosecutions (including tracking).
  - Corrections – The Riviera Beach Justice Service Center served 872 adults.
- \* See handouts for elaboration: handout #1 Goals and Objectives by program component; handout #2 Program Components' Services and Activities; handout #3 Youth Council members' assessments.

### **3. Outcomes: Youth Empowerment Centers**

- 50% of the youth who received school homework assistance experienced grade improvements.
- 100% of the youth who completed the computer program increased their pre/post test scores and received computers at the program's graduation
- 100% of the youth who completed the life skills course improved their pre/post test scores.
- Youth who served as members for the Youth Empowerment Centers' Youth Councils experienced significant gains in their pre/post self-determination measures (i.e., autonomy, problem solving and goal setting, self realization, and psychological empowerment).

## 4. Outcomes:

### Arrest Histories for Youth Empowerment Centers' Youth

- Of the 950 individual youth served by the Centers in 2007 and 2008, 68 had arrests before, during, or after their Center involvement, namely, 7% of the total.
- 23 of the 68, who had arrests only before their involvement with the Centers, had no further arrests for a 100% success rate for this group of youth.
- Only 45, of the 950 total youth served, had arrests during or after their participation in the Centers for a 95% overall success rate.
- In sum, there were 297 arrest charges among the 68 youth, of which 18% were for violent offenses and the remainder arrest charges were for property, drugs, and other.

## 5. Outcomes

### Arrest Histories for Justice Service Center's Adults

- 458 out of 872 participating adults had arrest histories
- 343 (75%) experienced no further arrests after they became involved in the Justice Service Center
- In sum, there were 8756 arrest charges among the 458 adults, of which 12% were for violent offenses and the remainder arrest charges were for property, drugs, and other.

## 6. Conclusions and Cost-Benefits

- The program components of Palm Beach County's Youth Violence Prevention Program have resulted in a series of targeted activities, services, and outcomes that together have positively confronted violent crime in Palm Beach County.
- Of particular interest, given the current economic downturn and prospects for continued economic turmoil, are the estimated cost-benefits that can be anticipated from this program.
- For example, the Youth Empowerment Centers have a cost of approximately \$10,825 per youth served.
- It is established in the criminological research literature that for 1 youth who is diverted from a life of crime and chemical abuse, \$2.2 million is saved over his or her lifetime (Cohen, 1998. Journal of Quantitative Criminology).
- Therefore, if the following percentages of the 905 Center youths remain crime-free, the estimated cost benefits are:
  - 20% (181 youth) would save \$398 million
  - 40% (362 youth) would save \$796 million
  - 60% (543 youth) would save \$1.2 billion
  - 80% (724 youth) would save \$1.6 billion

Calculation: 950 youth minus 45 with post-Center arrests = 905 x 20% x \$2.2m)

## 7. Recommendations

- It is clear from the preceding 2<sup>nd</sup> year evaluation findings that there is compelling justification for continued funding of the Palm Beach County Youth Violence Prevention Program.
- Moreover, it is recommended that Palm Beach give serious consideration to expanding the Youth Empowerment Centers into other cities with high rates of youth violence in the continuing effort to further reduce violent crime and its costs for the county.