



Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime

Violent crime continues to decline across the nation. However, law enforcement agencies are still grappling with offenses committed by youth. For years, during meetings and projects conducted by the PERF, law enforcement officials, prosecutors, government representatives, and others have voiced their frustrations regarding juvenile offenders. They have also expressed concern about the lack of effective interventions to prevent young people's behaviors from escalating.



Research from the Council on Criminal Justice suggests that while overall juvenile offending has decreased from its post-pandemic peak, those who do break the law are engaging in increasingly violent crime at younger ages than ever before. The issue was front and center this summer when PERF, in collaboration with the Maryland Governor's Office, hosted a meeting to highlight programs from seven different law enforcement agencies across the country that are engaging with youth in innovative ways. Each agency's program was designed to discourage young people from engaging in criminal conduct or to redirect those who had already committed crimes.

Below are summaries of these programs, along with links to the corresponding PowerPoint presentations.

Manassas City (VA) Police Department – Parent E3 Series & Team Quest

In 2019, the Manassas City Police Department (MCPD) began to notice an increase in violent crimes involving juveniles, particularly homicides. To address this issue, MCPD developed the Community Vitality Officer Program aimed at reducing juvenile-involved crimes by enhancing community relations through engagement, education, and empowerment. Two key components of this program are the Parent E3 Series and Team Quest.

The Parent E3 Series works in collaboration with caregivers to address at-risk behaviors among youth, such as absenteeism, dating abuse, and violence. It empowers parents to have important and meaningful conversations about these issues with their children. The Parent E3 Series has received notable recognition, including the 2032 Virginia Municipal League Public Safety Innovation Award and the 2024 U.S. Department of Justice Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service in Community Policing.

Team Quest serves as an early intervention program for at-risk youth aged 13 to 17, including those with low-level involvement in the court system. This program provides mentors and interactive learning opportunities for 40 to 50 program participants.

Kansas City (KS) Police Department – Driver's Ed Program

Kansas City Police Department (KCKPD) Chief Karl Oakman discovered through a survey that the city has a significant number of unlicensed drivers, particularly in urban areas. This issue is primarily due to costs, fear of engaging with government agencies, and a lack of knowledge about the licensing process. This creates disparity between young people in urban areas and those in the suburbs. Young unlicensed drivers in urban areas, in turn, have more negative interactions with the police, face challenges in managing fines, and unnecessarily enter the court system.

In 2022, KCKPD launched a driver's education program taught by officers using unmarked department vehicles. Since the program started, 340 young adults have obtained their licenses. This not only helps these individuals develop valuable skills, but it also fosters a positive relationship with the police. The program also reduces the likelihood of future tickets and accidents while enhancing recruitment efforts within the department.

Cedar Hill (TX) Police Department – Youth Summit

In 2012, residents of Cedar Hill identified community policing and community engagement as priorities. To support these priorities, the city approved using a portion of its sales tax to fund community policing programs at the Cedar Hill Police Department (CHPD). In turn, the CHPD allocated 10 percent of its 73-person staff to its Police and Community Team (PACT), which engages in crime prevention through community policing.

One creative program the PACT runs is a three-day Youth Summit for children ages 11 to 16 years. During the summit, youth learn about interacting with the police and various department activities, such as traffic stops and crime scene investigations. Additionally, they engage with officers during field day events, such as paintball and relays using impairment simulation goggles.

Initially, the program served 20 children each year; now, attendance is capped at 75 children per camp session due to its increasing popularity and high demand. Many attendees return year after year, often bringing their siblings and friends. Since the camp began, no attendee has had a negative interaction with law enforcement; even more encouraging, these youth frequently seek out officers for guidance and conversation.



Lincoln (NE) Police Department – Project Restore & Tipping Point

Project Restore

The Lincoln Police Department (LPD) analyzed youth referrals to the department and found that over one-third were for assaults that often took place in a school setting. As an intervention strategy, in 2015, LPD launched Project Restore, a pre-file diversion program for youth engaged in school-related disturbances or assaults. Participants commit to a restorative justice process, meeting with their victims to discuss the impact of the incident and explore potential remedies, such as an apology, restitution, or community service.

Researchers from the University of Nebraska are assessing the program's effectiveness, showing that 82.72 percent of participants have not reoffended, compared to 60.54 percent of non-participants.

Tipping Point

In 2015, LPD started Tipping Point to suppress violent gang activity by providing youth with support, services, and prosocial activities. Each participant is paired with a prevention specialist who acts as an informal mentor, as well as an intervention specialist who serves as a mentor and advocate in various areas, including the criminal justice system.

The program has had a significant impact on youth gang involvement and activity. Notably, from 2015 to 2024, there was a 51% decrease in gang-related incident reports. Additionally, youth aged 14-23 are consistently choosing to leave gangs.



Longmont (CO) Department of Public Safety – REWiND

In 2017, the City of Longmont and the Department of Public Safety, along with its youth and family services and probation departments, identified the need for an early intervention program to address juvenile crime. These stakeholders, along with a local restorative justice organization, started a pre-file deflection program, “Rebuilding Expectations and Walking in New Directions” (REWiND). REWiND provides services and resources to youth who have committed misdemeanors and felonies, with some exceptions for specific offenses.

This program has drastically reduced youth involvement in the criminal justice system. Since 2019, juvenile court cases in Longmont have dropped by over 90 percent, and the number of juveniles on supervised probation has decreased by approximately 80 percent.

Phoenix (AZ) Police Department – Youth Violence Reduction Program

In 2024, the Phoenix Police Department launched the Youth Violence Reduction Program, aimed at preventing violence at large residential parties, as many parties were ending in violence and shootings involving youth. Initially, officers gather intelligence on party promoters, utilize social network analysis, and prepare for potential secondary party locations. After an incident, officers follow up with property owners to help prevent similar events from happening in the future.



The program has substantially reduced party-related violence. In the Spring of 2024, there were two to three party-related shootings each weekend. However, after the program's implementation, there were only three party-related shootings from June through August 2024.

St. Petersburg (FL) Police Department – Second Chance, Forward Together & HOME

The St. Petersburg (FL) Police Department implemented the following programs based on Chief Anthony Holloway's belief that providing youth with guidance and opportunities is an effective crime prevention strategy. He recognized that parental involvement is crucial for the success of any intervention program and that families require comprehensive services to move beyond mere survival and effectively collaborate with law enforcement.

Second Chance Program

The Second Chance Program is designed for youth ages 9 to 17 years who have no prior criminal history and are charged with a misdemeanor. Instead of going through the criminal justice system, participants are diverted into the program, where they complete an eight-hour workday at a community farm. Additionally, both the participants and their families receive individualized support and resources.

The program has significantly reduced the recidivism rates of youth. Between 2019 and 2021, 68 percent of program participants did not reoffend—significantly outperforming their peers who did not participate in the program. Research from the [National Center for Juvenile Justice](#) found that in many states, up to 75 percent of youth reoffend within three years of confinement, with similar rates observed for youth on probation.

Forward Together

Forward Together offers a range of support services for justice-involved youth who may no longer qualify for diversion programs, as well as for their families. Although these young people still face consequences for their actions, they and their families are provided with resources, including mental health services and mentorship, as well as opportunities to engage in positive activities such as sports and arts programs.

The program has led to a sharp drop in recidivism—73 percent of youth participants have not been re-arrested, and those who have been faced less serious charges.



Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement

The Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement (HOME) program focuses on the small percentage of youth who commit the most crimes, providing intensive services to those with five or more felony convictions. HOME officers monitor each youth's location using GPS and conduct random home visits.

The program has been highly effective and well-received. From January to March 2025, intensive supervision for youth dropped by about 52 percent, while curfew and compliance checks fell by 25 percent compared to the same period in 2024. Feedback from parents has been positive; they report feeling relieved knowing what their child is doing. Additionally, the program serves as a strong deterrent; many youth say it would be easier to be in jail than to participate in the program.