



**City of Yonkers**

**Yonkers Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition**

**Yonkers Juvenile Justice Strategy  
and Action Plan**

**Prepared for the Yonkers Police Department  
and the Yonkers Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition  
by Program Design and Development, LLC**

**4/4/08**

PHILIP A. AMICONE  
MAYOR

EDMUND HARTNETT  
COMMISSIONER



POLICE DEPARTMENT  
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As Mayor of the City of Yonkers, I am pleased to present the Yonkers Juvenile Justice Strategy and Action Plan. This Action Plan outlines the specific steps we can take to be proactive and work together in Yonkers to prevent juvenile crime and make our city safer for all our residents.

This Action Plan shows how we can come together to solve Yonkers' problems. Over 80 people worked with the Yonkers Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition (YJCEC) over the last two years to develop this Action Plan. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services funded the planning process. The Yonkers Police Department administered the planning grant and coordinated the YJCEC planning process. The Yonkers Public Schools took the lead in developing creative solutions to prevent chronic truancy. Many county agencies helped develop this plan. Our local service providers stepped forward to share their expertise and develop new programs based on best practices that have been tested and proven effective nationwide.

We all know that the police alone cannot solve the problem of juvenile crime and youth violence. The police can lock up criminals, but criminals often come out of prison with stronger gang connections and always with greater difficulty getting an honest job. We need a way to give young people hope and prevent them from becoming our next generation of criminals.

The Yonkers Police Department has been very effective in using hard data to target its resources where they can have the greatest impact. This Plan shows how we can use the same approach to prevent youth crime. Lots of studies have identified risk factors for juvenile crime but until now, none have been able to identify which risk factors were most significant. Our police department and school district have worked together to develop a Pyramid of Risk that shows us how to use objective school data on truancy and suspensions to most effectively target prevention dollars. They have developed a new concept, Evidence-Based Targeting, explained in this Action Plan, that has the potential to transform how communities nationwide work to prevent juvenile crime. They have also collected data showing that chronic truancy is the tipping point that can change the trajectory of kids' lives toward a future of educational failure, poverty and crime.

The Yonkers Public School System has used this data to mobilize our community to address chronic truancy. They have worked with the county to implement a new strategy of using educational neglect laws to mobilize the child welfare system to help make sure that families get

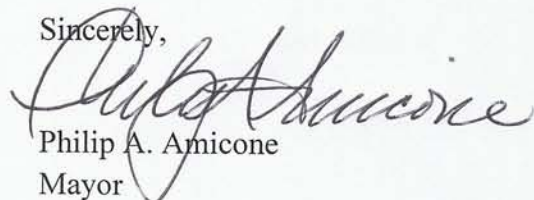
their children to school. The new system is already drawing statewide attention and has been discussed as a potential model for a new statewide policy that addresses chronic truancy.

The development of this new educational neglect reporting system developed by the Yonkers school district and the county is one of the most significant outgrowths of this citywide planning process. To quote one of the Action Plan's most striking conclusions:

The potential long-term benefits of addressing chronic truancy, especially in early grades, are enormous. New procedures could identify and help bring early intervention services to hundreds of high-risk youth in high-risk families who would otherwise in most cases float through the system unaided until they emerged again into public view as teenage delinquents, dropouts, and criminals. The early intervention services provided will not be able to save every student or turn around every dysfunctional family, but they offer our best hope for reducing school failure, violence, drug abuse and crime in Yonkers.

The hard data, clear thinking, strong collaborations and practical suggestions shown in this plan are making it possible for Yonkers to leap forward in addressing these problems. This plan has already resulted in over \$1.3 million dollars in county, state and Federal funding being made available to implement this Action Plan. I look forward to helping this plan unfold as a key part of the larger renaissance that is now taking place in this great city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Philip A. Amicone".

Philip A. Amicone

Mayor

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**1. Executive Summary**

The City of Yonkers recently announced that its improved law enforcement methods had resulted in a significant reduction in both violent and property crimes during the first half of 2007, compared to the same period in 2006. This report offers the City an opportunity to make similar progress in its ability to prevent as well as suppress juvenile crime. The “jewels” in this report include:

- ◆ **Specific recommendations:** This report lists 12 specific practical steps that can be taken within the next year by the City of Yonkers, Westchester County, the YJCEC, the Yonkers Public Schools, and local service providers to reduce juvenile crime in Yonkers.
- ◆ **The most authoritative juvenile justice needs assessment ever conducted in Yonkers:** We have pulled 16 years of juvenile arrest data into a new database that can be easily queried to show local juvenile crime trends and patterns. The major findings are presented here, including local data on juvenile crime, gangs, probation, truancy, and risk/protective factors.
- ◆ **“Evidence-Based Targeting” - a conceptual breakthrough in preventing juvenile crime:** Most communities try to reduce juvenile crime by addressing the most common risk factors. Our needs analysis showed that the vast majority of youth - even in the poorest neighborhoods - don’t get arrested. That means that the most common risk factors are actually the *least* strongly associated with actual crime. What communities need to do is find the less common combinations of risk factors that are most closely associated with juvenile crime. Youth with these combinations of risk factors are most likely to commit crimes and changing the trajectory of these youth thus offers the greatest potential for reducing crime.
- ◆ **A “Pyramid of Risk”:** Few researchers have ever tried to measure the relative importance of various risk factors. They compile long lists of generally accepted risk factors and assume that youth with more risk factors are more likely to commit crimes. The problem is that they treat all risk factors as equal, but living in a poor neighborhood or failing in school does not have the same impact as having an older brother in a gang who murdered a boy last week. We developed a system of unique IDs that enabled us for the first time to remove personally identifying information but still integrate data from the Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers Police Department, and Westchester County Department of Social Services to measure and document the specific degree of correlation between various combinations of risk factors and actual juvenile arrest rates. For the first time, we can begin to measure which risk factors put youth at greatest risk for juvenile crime, and thus focus limited funds for greatest impact.
- ◆ **“Moving upstream”:** One way to focus crime prevention resources on the highest risk youth is just to serve kids who have already been arrested. Our Pyramid of Risk provides a better alternative. It allows us to “move upstream” and serve kids before they get arrested, while still maximizing potential impact by remaining tightly focused on kids at highest risk. Our Pyramid of Risk identifies specific groups who had as high as a **61%** chance of being arrested within the next three years, and it does so without using racial profiling.
- ◆ **Potential Breakthroughs in Program Evaluation:** This report includes sample tools that programs using evidence-based targeting can use to estimate baseline data to document the actual number of crimes prevented by their program. These tools also enable funders to compare effectiveness and even cost per arrest prevented across programs.
- ◆ **Consensus on priority populations and priority interventions:** This report includes the YJCEC’s consensus on a prioritized list of the 3 specific highest-need populations that should be targeted and the 4 new evidence-based interventions most needed in Yonkers.

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- ◆ **Detailed implementation plan:** This report includes a detailed plan and budget that the City of Yonkers used to apply for \$200,000 in DCJS grant funding to begin implementing the YJCEC's strategy.
- ◆ **Model Programs and Best Practices:** The New York State Division of Criminal Justice (DCJS) has identified 43 Best Practices with the strongest evidence of effectiveness in preventing juvenile crime and violence among youth aged 7-15. Information on all 43 model programs is included in the Appendix. We found that only 6 of these evidence-based models are currently available or under development in Yonkers. They are listed in Section 7.
- ◆ **Risk and Protective Factor Survey results:** We administered a modified version of the Communities That Care risk and protective factor survey to 2,498 Yonkers students. The results are summarized in this report and the full Executive Summary is in the Appendix.
- ◆ **Other Resources:** This report provides other resources including identification of specific upcoming grant opportunities (in Section 9), citations for all literature quoted in the report (in Section 12), and (in the Appendix) the full text of other useful documents including a study quantifying the relative cost-effectiveness of 61 specific evidence-based interventions.

### **Participants**

This report grows out of a year-long Juvenile Justice Strategy Planning process funded by DCJS. Successfully completing the plan makes Yonkers eligible for up to \$500,000 over three years to implement the plan. More importantly, this plan serves as a guide for pulling together all of the available resources to reduce youth violence, gang activity and other youth crime in Yonkers.

During this year **85** individuals from **40** organizations have helped develop this plan, including:

- ◆ The Yonkers Police Department's Administrative Division, Community Affairs Division, Intelligence Unit, Planning and Development Unit, and Youth Services Division;
- ◆ The City of Yonkers' Department of Community Planning and Development, Office of Community Services, and Office of Youth Services;
- ◆ The Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers Family Court, Yonkers Chamber of Commerce, and Yonkers Weed & Seed Initiative;
- ◆ The Westchester County Department of Probation, Department of Social Services, Department of Community Mental Health, Office of African-American Affairs, Youth Bureau, County Attorney's Office, and District Attorney's Office;
- ◆ **18** local service providers (Big Brothers Big Sisters, Children's Village, CLUSTER, Family Service Society of Yonkers, Family Services of Westchester, H.O.P.E, Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial, Leake and Watts, Nepperhan Community Center, Sharing Community, Student Advocacy, Student Assistance Services Corp., Victims Assistance Services, Westhab, Yonkers Community Action Program, Yonkers Employment Center, Yonkers Residential Center, and YMCA of Yonkers); and
- ◆ Program Design and Development, LLC; the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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## **Rationale**

Improved law enforcement can reduce crime by “locking up the bad guys” but this is only part of what is needed to create and sustain safer communities. When young criminals are sent to prison they usually return to their community years later, often with stronger gang connections and always with greater difficulty securing honest employment. Yonkers needs a way to help prevent young people from becoming our next generation of local criminals.

Our efforts to prevent crime are hampered by severe funding constraints. Little new money is available for new prevention programs. We can overcome this barrier by coordinating funding from multiple sources, reallocating existing resources whenever possible, and - most importantly - by using the limited funds where they will have the greatest impact.

Our report discusses two ways to target funding more effectively. One way is to use more evidence-based programs, i.e. programs that have already been rigorously evaluated and proven effective. Research has shown that even well-planned and well-managed crime prevention programs often turn out to have little or no impact on reducing crime. Some well-intentioned programs even backfire and make crime worse.<sup>1</sup> Most of our local programs are home-grown and cannot afford to conduct a rigorous evaluation to determine how well they work. Instead of reinventing the wheel, we should encourage local agencies to replicate proven models. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) has identified 43 Best Practices with the strongest evidence of effectiveness in preventing juvenile crime and violence among youth aged 7-15. There are only six (6) of these evidence-based practices currently available or under development in Yonkers.

Another way to target funding more effectively is by using a new concept developed by the YJCEC: evidence-based targeting. Most prevention money is currently targeted - if at all - to the poorest neighborhoods. The data we’ve collected, however, shows that most Yonkers youth -even in the poorest neighborhoods - don’t get arrested. While 1 in 29 of all Yonkers youth aged 7-15 had been arrested once, the proportion rose only slightly to 1 in 23 in the poorest neighborhoods (census tracts where 20% or more of all residents live in poverty). Even an evidence-based program will have little impact on local crime rates if it primarily serves kids who would not have been arrested, even without the intervention. Our report identifies specific risk factors in Section 5 that can be used to target limited funds to the youth most likely to be arrested within the next 3 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising: A Report To The United States Congress prepared for the National Institute of Justice by the University of Maryland Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice under NIJ Grant # 96MUMU0019, at [www.ncjrs.gov/works](http://www.ncjrs.gov/works).

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**Summary of YJCEC Recommendations**

The specific recommendations contained in our Action Plan are summarized below:

**A. Use evidence-based targeting to document and measure programs' effectiveness:**

Agencies that fund delinquency prevention programs should use the data we've collected to compute an estimated baseline arrest rate for the youth served by their programs in order to measure their effectiveness. The funder can then objectively measure whether their investment in delinquency prevention is paying off. Funders and service providers can also use the estimated baseline to calculate their program's cost-effectiveness. A specific example of how the data can be used to calculate estimated baselines is included in Section 5, with a sample form that could be easily used by service providers and/or funders.

**B. Retarget a portion of existing funding (CDBG, Invest In Kids) to support new Evidence Based Initiatives (EBIs):** Local funders should retarget a portion of existing funding streams whenever possible by giving priority to applicants that propose to use evidence-based programs and evidence-based targeting. The Yonkers Planning Department could set aside a portion of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding specifically for this purpose, and/or it could give priority in future rounds of CDBG funding to youth programs that incorporate evidence-based programs and evidence-based targeting. The Westchester County Youth Bureau can provide funding for these programs, either by setting aside a specific pot of money for this purpose or by giving priority to proposals that incorporate evidence-based programs and evidence-based targeting.

**C. Retarget existing programs to serve higher-risk youth:** Local youth-serving organizations, should consider using evidence-based targeting to refocus their youth crime prevention programs to the extent possible on the specific groups identified by our Pyramid of Risk as being at highest risk of becoming juvenile offenders.

**D. Address mental health needs of juvenile offenders:** Our Mental Health Subcommittee's major recommendations are to:

1. increase funding for staff training in both treatments so that more staff from Yonkers-based agencies is available in Yonkers to offer home-based FFT and MST for youth with higher-end needs, and
2. increase funding for designated clinical staff to offer family therapy that is center-based to targeted populations in Yonkers.

The YJCEC also notes there are no Spanish speaking FFT or MST therapists available in Yonkers. The group agreed that this service gap should be addressed, perhaps by using part of future grant funding to provide hiring bonuses for bilingual therapists who agreed to be trained in FST and/or MST and to provide those services in Yonkers for a minimum period of years. (DCJS has informed the YJCEC that this is not an allowable use of DCJS funding.)

The YJCEC also applauds WCDCMH, the Yonkers Public Schools, Andrus, and Family Services of Westchester for bringing the Child and Family Clinic Plus program to Yonkers. The YJCEC urges WCDCMH and its partners to target these new resources to the maximum feasible extent to serving middle school students who are chronically truant and/or suspended for violent behavior. These youth should be targeted because they are at particularly high and imminent risk for becoming delinquent and involved in juvenile crime. The Child and Family Clinic Plus program offers a major new resource for providing school-based early intervention and home-based treatment services.

**E. Develop a substance abuse prevention program specifically targeting inhalants:** The Yonkers Prevention Needs Assessment Survey showed that Yonkers had surprisingly high rates of inhalant abuse: 11% of all those surveyed had used inhalants on one or more occasions. Inhalant abuse is very dangerous and even brief initial experimentation can cause brain damage or even death.

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There appears to be no substance abuse prevention program currently underway in Yonkers that specifically addresses inhalant abuse. The YJCEC recommends that this issue be addressed through a school- or community-based public education campaign focused on the dangers of inhalant abuse.

**F. Apply for DCJS Implementation grant:** The City of Yonkers should apply for Formula Grant funding from DCJS to begin implementing YJCEC's violence reduction strategies. Yonkers expects to be eligible for up to \$200,000 per year for two years, plus 50% of this amount in Year 3. An outline of the program that should be submitted to DCJS is provided in Section 10.

**G. Apply for Drug-Free Communities Support Program:** The Yonkers Planning Department should apply for a FY09 Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant, which will probably be due in April 2009. This Federal grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, will provide annually renewable \$100,000 grants to create and sustain community coalitions focused on preventing and reducing substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing community factors that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk.

**H. Link prevention and intervention efforts to Weed & Seed, Project Impact, Project Safe Neighborhood, USAO Gang Prevention, and Project Ceasefire initiatives:** Most law enforcement efforts currently underway in Yonkers have focused almost exclusively on suppression, but some, like Weed & Seed, have specific prevention/intervention components. The YJCEC should work to coordinate crime prevention and intervention programs with these initiatives. For example, the YJCEC can coordinate with these programs by encouraging YJCEC members to target the same neighborhoods, high-risk groups, specific high-priority gangs, etc.

**I. Apply for other DOJ and DCJS grant programs:** YJCEC members should apply whenever possible for other sources of funding available from the U.S. Department of Justice's programs. A variety of specific grant opportunities are identified in Section 9 of this report.

**J. Sustain expanded YJCEC:** Our recommendation to sustain the expanded YJCEC has 4 parts: 1) The YJCEC needs to continue meeting on a monthly basis to monitor DCJS-funded initiatives, share information and coordinate planning; 2) There should be one or more individuals who are specifically assigned to plan and facilitate the YJCEC meetings; 3) We should continue to provide lunch for noon meetings. Funding should be requested from our DCJS Implementation grant for this purpose. Providing lunch at the YJCEC's monthly noon meetings helps us get more consistent attendance from senior people who are often too busy to regularly attend meetings at other times; and 4) Subcommittees and/or ad hoc workgroups should continue to meet on an as-needed basis.

**K. Refine data analysis:** The YJCEC should continue to refine our analysis of the data we've collected and been able to cross-reference across multiple service systems. We should seize this opportunity to identify additional risk factors and combinations of risk factors that are most closely associated with juvenile crime and violence so that we can more precisely target groups of particularly high-risk youth. We should also further analyze the school-level data from our Needs Assessment Survey by correlating it with actual levels of violence in the schools in order to identify specific risk and protective factors most closely associated with higher actual levels of violence.

**L. Review local Disproportionate Minority Contact data:** The YJCEC should complete the Disproportionate Minority Contact Relative Rate Index Matrix within the next few months. The Matrix was developed by the U.S. Department of Justice last year. It gives communities a simple and clear way to measure whether racial disparities are magnified or reduced at each stage of the local juvenile justice system. If the chart indicates that a particular part of the system is magnifying racial disparities, communities can then form a work group to find out why and come up with objectively verifiable solutions. Completing this chart will help the YJCEC objectively decide whether there are racial disparities we should address in our local juvenile justice system.



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**Overview of Sections Contained in This Report**

**Section 1 - Executive Summary** gives an overview of the report's planning process, findings, structure, and specific recommendations.

**Section 2 - Goals and Objectives** outlines the YJCEC's goals, objectives and guiding principles.

**Section 3 - Needs Assessment** presents key local data on juvenile crime, gangs, probation, truancy, and risk/protective factors.

**Section 4 - Barriers** describes major barriers to reducing juvenile crime in Yonkers, including limited new resources for prevention and current scarcity of evidence-based programs in Yonkers.

**Section 5 - Strategies** describes six recommended general strategies for reducing juvenile crime, including the use of "evidence-based targeting", a new concept developed by the YJCEC.

**Section 6 - Priorities** identifies - and prioritizes - Yonkers' three highest-priority target populations and four most needed new evidence-based interventions.

**Section 7 - Current Evidence-Based Interventions** lists the six programs that are the only evidence-based interventions included on DCJS' list of recommended best practices that are currently operating or under development in Yonkers.

**Section 8 - Planned Activities** describes four related activities currently being planned in Yonkers, including two major truancy reduction initiatives, a proposed new Federally-funded mentoring program, and a new program that will significantly expand school-based mental health services.

**Section 9 - Recommendations** list 12 specific practical steps that can be taken within the next year by the City of Yonkers, Westchester County, the YJCEC, the Yonkers Public Schools, and local service providers to reduce juvenile crime in Yonkers.

**Section 10 - Outline of Proposed DCJS Implementation Grant** describes the program plan and budget that the City of Yonkers should submit later this year to DJCS for a \$200,000 Juvenile Justice Strategy Implementation Grant.

**Section 11 - Recommended Timetable for Implementation** describes the timetable with which our YJCEC recommendations can be implemented.

**Section 12 - References** gives citations for all documents quoted in this report, including all the studies mentioned in the quotes, thus making it easy to find more information about specific topics.

**Section 13 - Appendices** contains the full text of key documents including DCJS's list of recommended evidence-based interventions, the study quantifying the relative cost-effectiveness of 61 specific evidence-based interventions, a detailed description of our goals and guiding principles, a press release describing the recent drop in crime in Yonkers due to improved law enforcement methods, budget detail for the Functional Family Therapy Training and Travel Costs that should be included in Yonkers' Juvenile Justice Strategy Implementation Grant application to DCJS, and the Executive Summary of the YJCEC's school-based 2007 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey.