

Investing in Kids Now Can Prevent Future Crime in Michigan

High-quality preschool, home visiting, and K-12 programs keep kids and communities safe in the long run



Acknowledgements

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime

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Authors:

Heather Maxey, Research Associate Director

Sandra Bishop, Ph.D., Chief Research Officer

Contributors:

Joshua Spaulding, National Director, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Mariana Galloway, Art Director

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44%
of Michigan
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child care desert

The law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Michigan know that one of the most effective ways to prevent crime is to provide young people with a foundation for success from their earliest years. From birth through high school, children need strong parents and effective programs and supports to grow up to be successful, productive members of society. The approaches listed here, based on research about what really works, can set children on the right path and make our communities safer in the long run.

Children in Michigan

There are approximately 2.1 million children under age 18 in Michigan, comprising 21 percent of the state's population.¹ Nearly 18 percent of kids statewide live in poverty and 39 percent live in families with low incomes.² Among kids under the age of 6,

Four Approaches That Work

1. Make **high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs** available to kids ages birth-to-five from families with low incomes.
2. Offer **voluntary parent coaching** to at-risk parents of young children through home visiting programs.
3. Provide **effective school day, afterschool and summer programs** to improve school climate and keep kids on track.
4. Help kids who have had contact or are at risk of having contact with the juvenile justice system by providing them and their parents **effective interventions**.



69 percent have all available parents in the workforce and many require child care, afterschool or summer programs.³

1. Make high-quality ECE programs available to kids ages birth-to-five from families with low incomes

During the first five years of life, children form the foundations of cognitive, social, and emotional development upon which all later learning and growth are built. This is a period of critical brain development, with one million neural connections formed every second.⁴ Research shows that high-quality ECE for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers can set kids—especially those from disadvantaged circumstances—up for success in school and beyond. For example:

- A longitudinal study of more than 1,300 children found that children in higher-

quality child care were better prepared for school at age 4 compared to children in lower-quality child care. At age 15, they were still performing slightly above their peers and had significantly lower levels of behavior problems.⁵

- The Child-Parent Centers preschool program has served over 100,000 three- and four-year-olds. Researchers followed a sample of participants up until age 28 and found that children who did not participate were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. Those who participated had a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rate.⁶
- In Michigan, participants in the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), the state-funded pre-K initiative, were held back 51 percent less often than non-participants⁷ and reported a 35 percent increase in high school graduation.⁸

Despite the importance of high-quality ECE, 44 percent of Michigan families live in a child care desert, where there are more than three children for every licensed child care slot.⁹ Michigan has also allocated over \$1 billion in federal funds to begin to stabilize the child care industry, but workforce and affordability gaps remain, and expanded and continued investment is necessary to ensure that every working family has access to high-quality child care.

2. Offer voluntary parent coaching to at-risk parents of young children through home visiting programs

In 2020, nearly 28,000 Michigan children were reported as abused or neglected,¹⁰ which has been found to increase the likelihood of later involvement in crime.¹¹ To stop child abuse before it starts, we must

provide at-risk parents with evidence-based home visiting programs.

- The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) provides at-risk families with voluntary visits from nurses who offer coaching in parenting skills and provide emotional support, beginning during the mother's pregnancy and continuing until the child's second birthday. Research shows that children served by the program were about half as likely to be abused or neglected than those not served.¹²
- A study of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visiting program showed a 22 percent reduction in the number of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect among participants.¹³

Federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding allows the Michigan Home Visiting Initiative to provide eight home visiting models, including NFP, PAT, Healthy Families America, and Family Spirit, a model designed by and for Native American Families.¹⁴ In 2019, home visiting programs served nearly 27,000 families throughout the state.¹⁵

3. Provide effective before and afterschool programs, and summer learning opportunities, to children and youth to help keep them on track

Bullying and harsh school discipline have been shown to negatively impact youth in both the short- and long-term. In addition, crime peaks after school, from 2:00 to 6:00 PM.¹⁶ We can help children steer clear of crime by promoting: 1) effective programs during school hours, especially those that reduce bullying and improve school climate, and 2) high-quality out-of-school time (OST) programs.

“Investing in high-quality preschool and afterschool programs can help kids achieve academic success now, and keep them out of trouble later.”







Sheriff Mike Shea
Gladwin County

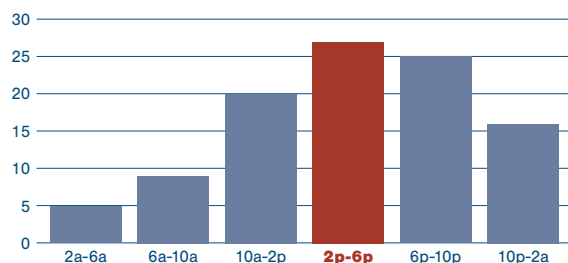
- Being bullied in school is associated with substance use, and bullies have been found to have a 3.5 times higher likelihood of later having at least one conviction than non-bullies or victims, and a six times increased likelihood of committing at least one violent crime later in life.¹⁷ The Olweus bullying prevention program is one effective intervention, proven to reduce instances of being bullied and bullying others.¹⁸
- The School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program is a three-tier system for encouraging positive behavior and improving school climate.¹⁹ All students are taught expectations for their behavior (Tier 1). Students who are not successful in Tier 1 receive more intensive support in small groups (Tier 2). For the few children still unable to succeed, Tier 3

2 to 6 p.m.: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime in Michigan

Quality Afterschool Programs:

-  **Reduce Crime**
-  **Boost Academics**
-  **Improve Behavior**
-  **Lead to Healthier Habits**
-  **Save Money**

Juvenile Crime by Time of Day



offers intensive, individual supports. Studies have shown that SWPBIS reduces suspensions and increases perceived school safety, earning it an “effective” rating from the National Institute of Justice.²⁰

- A meta-analysis of afterschool programs across the country found nearly three in five students who attended such programs had improved behavior in and outside of the classroom, performed better in math and reading, and had higher GPAs.²¹

The Michigan Department of Education provides guidelines for schools, students, and families on how to prevent bullying at school and online.²² The Department has developed a model anti-bullying policy that school districts can utilize to create a healthy school environment and improve student outcomes.

Over 210,000 Michigan students participate in OST programs.²³ These include the YMCA and YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, mentoring programs, and others.²⁴ In 2020, the state received over \$36 million in 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC)

funding.²⁵ In an evaluation of Michigan’s programs, 77 percent of parents believed that CCLC helped prevent students from engaging in risky behaviors.²⁶ Unfortunately, more than 625,000 students sit on waiting lists, unable to participate due to the lack of available afterschool programs; further, there is not consistent state funding for afterschool.²⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated access problems. Although 70 percent of OST programs nationwide report serving students in some way during the pandemic, 84 percent say that they may not be able to continue providing services, due to financial challenges.²⁸ Findings suggest that students in grades 1-12 who are impacted by school closures, and potential loss of OST program access, may experience lifetime incomes that are three percent lower than their peers not impacted by closures.²⁹

4. Help kids who have had contact with the juvenile justice system by providing them and their parents effective interventions.

Many youths who have already had contact with the juvenile justice system can get back on track with the right help:

- Some intensive family therapy programs, such as Functional Family Therapy (FFT) or Multisystemic Therapy (MST) provide well-tested strategies to parents or foster parents and work with youth themselves to reduce problem behaviors. Research shows that new arrests of youth in these programs have been cut by as much as half compared to similar youth not receiving this assistance.³⁰
- Diversion programs direct youth who have committed offenses away from the juvenile justice system.³¹ These programs take many different forms including mentoring, community-based programs, and family-based programs. Research has demonstrated that diversion programs more effectively reduce recidivism than do traditional juvenile justice programs.³²
- The Michigan Task Force on Juvenile Justice Reform is also an opportunity to build the case for investment into programming that will divert youth from the most challenging placements and encourage better and more equitable life outcomes.



In Michigan there are two authorized FFT sites (in Berrien County and Flint)³³ and 11 MST-licensed organizations,³⁴ which represents woefully inadequate capacity to meet the need.

Conclusion: Pay now or pay much more later

When we fail to invest effectively in our children, all Michiganders pay the price—in taxes for criminal justice costs, costs to business, and costs to victims. Worse are the costs in human suffering. Investing now in what works not only saves lives and protects Michiganders, it saves money:

- A study estimated that the average value of preventing a child from growing up to become a youth who drops out of school, uses drugs, and goes on to engage in criminal behavior is at least \$2.6 million per individual.³⁵

Helping kids get the right start in life will save money, build a stronger Michigan, and protect our communities. Throughout the state, our law enforcement leaders know the investments laid out in this plan will collectively help steer our kids onto the right path in life and benefit our state for years to come. It is time to invest in what works.

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1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005

