

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### Overview

This paper explores strategies to prevent the “cradle-to-prison pipeline” and the potential impact of these prevention efforts on substance abuse, mental health issues, violence, and chronic disease at a community and societal level. It also explores how these strategies address inequitable discipline and arrests among youth of color.

### The Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline

The cradle-to-prison pipeline refers to a national trend in which certain school policies and practices channel already disadvantaged children from the public-school system into the juvenile and criminal justice system. The Children’s Defense Fund describes the pipeline as “a trajectory that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and often premature death.”<sup>1</sup> Many of the children caught in the pipeline face poverty, racial discrimination, environmental dangers, abuse, neglect, and disability. One study showed that more than 13 percent of K-12 students with disabilities were suspended in 2009-2010, which is approximately twice the rate of their non-disabled peers.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1980s, many schools began implementing zero tolerance discipline policies to make schools safer and to create a climate more conducive to learning. Zero tolerance policies assign harsh disciplinary actions, like suspension and expulsion, for minor to major offenses, and disproportionately affect students of color. The intended impact of zero tolerance policies were not realized with research showing that zero tolerance policies are less effective and more discriminatory than initially thought. Studies also found a negative relationship between school suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement.<sup>3</sup> These policies are also thought to contribute to higher incarceration rates and overall costs to states. The reliance on punishment and incarceration contributes to the United States having the largest prison population in the developed world. Further, states spend, on average, nearly three times as much per prisoner as per public school pupil.<sup>4</sup> It has become clear that zero tolerance policies have not provided the promised benefits and have significant adverse effects in terms of actual costs and inequity.

In response to these findings, some schools and communities are implementing more flexible discipline models and prevention efforts to balance the need for school safety with ensuring quality education for all. Research has shown that with these early interventions and supports, children are less likely to act out and enter a cycle of discipline.

### Racial Discrimination as a Factor in the Pipeline

As noted above, disciplinary interventions tend to disproportionately affect youth of color and this trend can begin as early as preschool. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, while black children represent 18 percent of preschool enrollment they comprise 48 percent of preschool children receiving more than one out-of-school suspension. White students, in comparison, represent 43

<sup>1</sup> Children’s Defense Fund. “Cradle to Prison Pipeline Campaign.” Accessed June 8, 2017. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/campaigns/cradle-to-prison-pipeline/>.

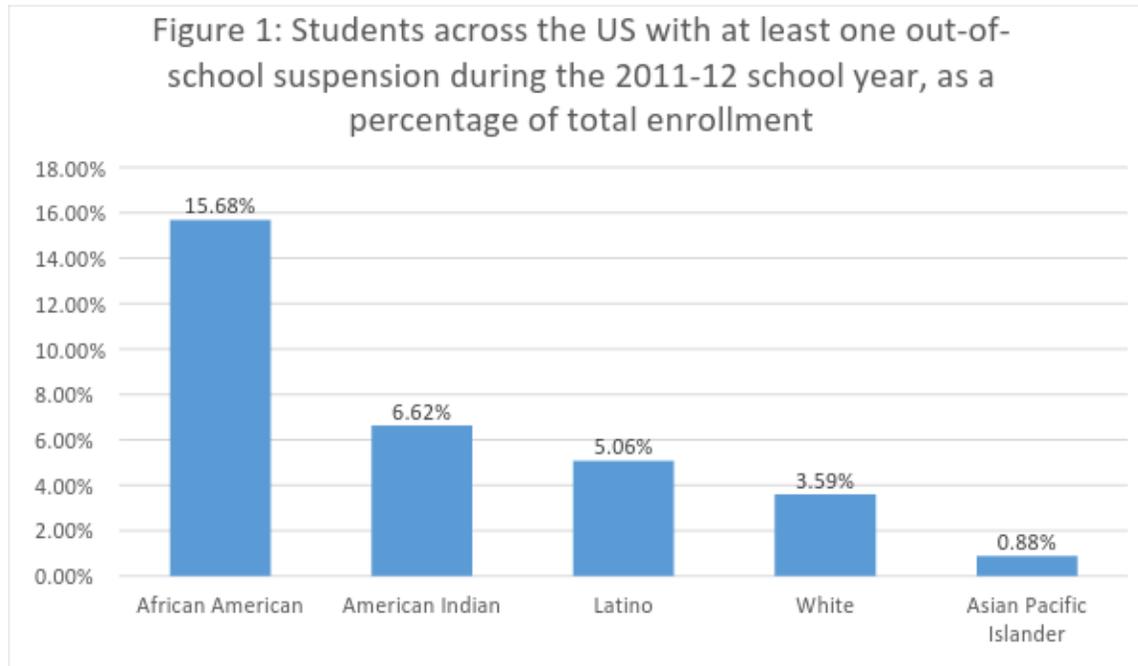
<sup>2</sup> Losen and Gillespie, “Opportunities Suspended: The Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Exclusion from School”. *The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project*. August 2012.

<sup>3</sup> American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. “Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations”. *American Psychologist*. 63(2008): 852–862.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education. “Report: Increases in Spending on Corrections Far Outpace Education”. July 7, 2016. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/report-increases-spending-corrections-far-outpace-education>. Accessed June 11, 2017. HMA1June 16, 2017

percent of preschool enrollment and only 26 percent receive more than one out-of-school suspension.<sup>5</sup>

Across all grades, nearly one in six black students (16%) received at least one out-of-school suspension compared to only 4 percent of white students. School-related arrests have a similarly inequitable distribution. Suspension rates across racial groups are shown in the chart below.



Source: Calculated from CRDC, 2011-12<sup>6</sup>

Schools with large populations of students of color often rely on tougher discipline policies.<sup>7</sup> As more minority students are kept out of school, the gap in educational achievement could increase.

### The Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline in Colorado

Colorado mirrors the national trend of youth incarceration, including disparities along racial and socioeconomic lines. For example, students of color at Denver Public Schools (DPS) are over three times as likely to be suspended or expelled than white students.<sup>8</sup> In a survey of Southwest Denver parents, 16 percent of respondents stated that Pre-K students are frequently suspended, expelled or asked to leave for disciplinary reasons.<sup>9</sup>

According to state data, there were 3,848 referrals of students to law enforcement in the 2015-2016 school

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. “Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: School Discipline.” March 2014. Accessed June 7, 2017. <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights Data Collection. “2011-12 State and National Estimations” Accessed June 11, 2017. [http://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations\\_2011\\_12](http://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations_2011_12).

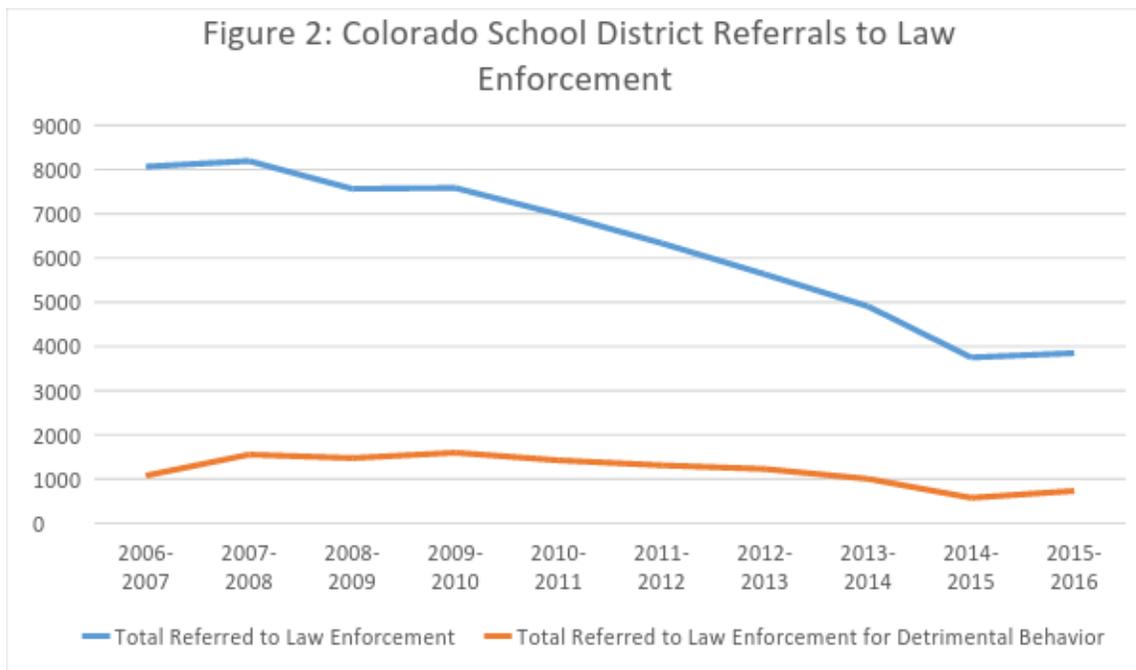
<sup>7</sup> “Test, Punish, and Push Out: How ‘Zero Tolerance’ and High-Stakes Testing Funnel Youth Into the School-to-Prison Pipeline”, *Advancement Project*, March 2010. [http://b3cdn.net/advancement/d05cb2181a4545db07\\_r2im6caqe.pdf](http://b3cdn.net/advancement/d05cb2181a4545db07_r2im6caqe.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Padres & Jovenes Unidos. “5<sup>th</sup> Annual Denver Community Accountability Report Card.” 2016. Accessed June 7, 2017. [http://padresunidos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PJU-REPORT-CARD-04-2016-Final-Compress\\_0.pdf](http://padresunidos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PJU-REPORT-CARD-04-2016-Final-Compress_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Padres & Jovenes Unidos. “THE GREAT UNEQUALIZER: How Denver’s Pre-K System Fails the Children of Southwest Denver and Other Low-Income Communities of Color.” 2016. Accessed June 7, 2017. [http://padresunidos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ece\\_reportENG.pdf](http://padresunidos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ece_reportENG.pdf).

year.<sup>10</sup> Almost 44 percent of those referrals were for relatively low-level infractions such as “detrimental behavior” and “other code of conduct violations”. Fourteen percent of referrals were for drug, alcohol, or tobacco violations.

The DPS has emerged as a leader in addressing the cradle-to-prison pipeline by rewriting its discipline codes. In partnership with a local grassroots group called Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, DPS clarified and limited the power of police in schools and, thus, saw a substantial drop in the number of student suspensions and expulsions.<sup>11</sup> Referrals of students to law enforcement have been decreasing over time as illustrated in the chart below.



Source: Colorado Department of Education

### The Cost of Letting the Pipeline Persist

The most easily measurable cost of the cradle-to-prison pipeline is the cost of incarceration. In 2012, the reported cost per year to house a youth inmate in Colorado was \$104,985 or almost \$290 per day.<sup>12</sup> The cost of incarceration has been rising over time and diverting resources from other government programs. Other costs include more long-term impacts of a reduction in schooling and work productivity, recidivism, an ability to earn a living, pay taxes, and a reliance on public assistance.<sup>13</sup> Below is an estimate of the costs the U.S. incurs by incarcerating youth.

<sup>10</sup> “2015-16 State Suspension and Expulsion Rates and Reasons”, Colorado Department of Education, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/suspend-expelcurrent>.

<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Klein, “Denver Is Leading The Way In Dismantling The School-To-Prison Pipeline. Here’s How.” *Huffington Post*. September 8, 2015. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/15/denver-public-schools-discipline\\_n\\_7715358.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/07/15/denver-public-schools-discipline_n_7715358.html)

<sup>12</sup> Justice Policy Institute. “Sticker Shock: Calculating the Full Price Tag for Youth Incarceration”. December 2014. [http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/sticker\\_shock\\_final\\_v2.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/sticker_shock_final_v2.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1: Estimated Long-Term Costs for Confinement of Young People**

Billions of 2011 Dollars:	Low End of Range	High End of Range
<b>Cost of recidivism</b>	\$0	\$7.03
<b>Lost future earnings of confined youth</b>	\$4.07	\$7.60
<b>Lost future government tax revenue</b>	\$2.07	\$3.87
<b>Additional Medicare and Medicaid spending</b>	\$0.86	\$1.50
<b>Cost of sexual assault on confined youth</b>	\$0.90	\$1.37
<b>Total, all costs</b>	\$7.90	\$21.47

Source: Justice Policy Institute, 2014

## Promising Models and Strategies to Disrupt the Cradle-To-Prison Pipeline

### Potential Elements of Models to Disrupt the Pipeline

While there is strong evidence demonstrating the association between the pipeline and racial disparity, evidence-based strategies to reduce disparities are limited. Additional testing of school-based interventions is needed to validate their effectiveness.<sup>14</sup> Following is a summary of the current evidence and theory on promising practices to disrupt the pathway from school to incarceration.

**Avoid zero tolerance discipline policies.** As noted earlier, research demonstrates that zero tolerance discipline does not produce positive results for children. Instead, school districts can adopt policies and practices that promote more equitable disciplinary actions such as diversion as a supported alternative to tough punishment. Diversion is especially effective in early stages as suspensions and expulsions are occurring as soon as Pre-K and can start a cycle of subsequent suspensions, expulsion, and dropping out.<sup>15</sup>

**Shift to prevention rather than punishment.** Prevention focuses on reducing the need for youth to be disciplined. This could mean redefining what behaviors are viewed as requiring discipline as well as promoting positive behaviors. Potential approaches include more effective academic instruction for at-risk students and school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports.<sup>16</sup> The key components of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports include (a) teaching a small set of positive, schoolwide behavioral expectations to all students, (b) establishing a regular pattern in which all adults acknowledge and reward appropriate student behavior, (c) minimizing the likelihood that problem behaviors will be inadvertently rewarded, and (d) collecting and using behavioral data to guide whole-school support efforts.<sup>17</sup>

**Identify risk through screening.** Evidence-based screening and assessment tools can be used to identify social, emotional, and behavioral problems that indicate a need for early intervention. They can also be used to better target interventions to the need. Some of these tools include<sup>18</sup>:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE) to assess social-emotional development

<sup>14</sup> McIntosh et. al. “Education not Incarceration: A Conceptual Model for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality in School Discipline”. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*. 5(2014), Article 4.

<sup>15</sup> Osher et al., “How Can We Improve School Discipline?,” *Educational Researcher* 39 (2010): 48–58

<sup>16</sup> McIntosh et. al. “Education not Incarceration” (2014).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Cooper, Masi, and Vick, “Social-emotional Development in Early Childhood What Every Policymaker Should Know”. *National Center for Children in Poverty*. August 2009. [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_882.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_882.pdf).

- Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)
- Preschool Early Childhood Functional Assessment Scale (PEC-FAS)
- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)

**Focus on diversion once risk is identified.** Most of the interventions studied involve some element of diversion away from detention. A meta-analysis focused on the effects of youth diversion programs on recidivism found that diversion is more effective in reducing recidivism than judicial interventions.<sup>19</sup> Another meta-analysis study that reviewed the evidence-base for diversion interventions reviewed five program types: (1) case management, (2) individual treatment, (3) family treatment, (4) youth court, and (5) restorative justice. The review found that only family treatment led to a statistically significant reduction in recidivism.<sup>20</sup> For example, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is an effective family-based prevention and intervention strategy for high-risk youth that leverages multiple therapy sessions for families. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimated the benefit to cost ratio of FFT at \$12.60:1.<sup>21</sup>

**Collect and use data to monitor.** To track and monitor whether interventions are working for all students, it is critical to collect student data disaggregated by race. The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports has a guidebook for monitoring outcomes of equity in school discipline.<sup>22</sup>

### National Programs

#### *AMIkids Personal Growth Model*

The AMIkids Personal Growth Model (PGM) provides treatment for youth between 10 to 17 years of age who have been adjudicated and assigned to a day treatment program, residential treatment setting, or alternative school instead of being incarcerated. The program offers a treatment plan based on assessed needs of the youth and his or her family. The treatment plan combines several components to reduce risk factors that lead to continued delinquent behavior including:

- Education based on individualized needs and diverse learning styles
- Treatment using evidence-based mental health and/or substance abuse interventions
- Behavior modification using positive reinforcement to strengthen prosocial behaviors

Two evaluations of the program have been completed that suggest this model is a promising practice. One found slightly lower rates of readjudication/reconviction, rearrest, felony rearrest, felony readjudication/reconviction, and recommitment/adult probation/prison incarceration for program participants.<sup>23</sup> The second evaluation found that kids who participated in the program also had slight improvements in academic achievement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Wilson and Hoge, “The effect of Youth Diversion Programs on Recidivism: A Meta-Analytic Review”. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 40(2013): 497-518.

<sup>20</sup> Schwalbe, C et. al. “A meta-analysis of experimental studies of diversion programs for juvenile offenders”. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 32(2012) 26-33.

<sup>21</sup> “Functional Family Therapy (youth in state institutions)”. Washington State Institute for Public Policy Benefit-Cost Results. <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/40>. May 2017.

<sup>22</sup> McIntosh, Horner, and Sugai. “Using discipline data within SWPBIS to identify and address disproportionality: A guide for school teams”. *Eugene, OR: OSEP TA Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*. 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Early et. al. “Experiential community-based interventions for delinquent youth: An evaluation of recidivism and cost-effectiveness.” Unpublished manuscript. 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Early, Blankenship, and, G. A. “Evaluation of AMIkids alternative school and juvenile justice program educational outcomes: An examination of pre/post test academic change.” *Tallahassee, FL: Justice Research Center*. June 2011.  
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### ***Juvenile Breaking the Cycle Program***

The Juvenile Breaking the Cycle Program (JBTC) program used comprehensive assessments to identify youth with high risk and provided and coordinated individualized services through alcohol or other drug programs.<sup>25</sup> The program, based out of Lane County, Oregon, was intended to last 12 months, with some youth taking longer to complete the program. Components of the model included:

- Judicial oversight, including court-mandated, monitored intervention plans.
- Urinalysis testing to monitor drug use and inform intervention strategies.
- Substance abuse screening, referral and treatment.
- Mental health screening, assessment and services.

JBTC participants were significantly less likely to recidivate and had significantly fewer arrests, compared with non-participants.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program***

Starting in 2014, the Philadelphia School District sends students to a diversion intake center when a school police offer was called in rather than arresting the students. The diversion program applies to students who are at least 10 years old, have no record of delinquency adjudications or probation supervision, and whose behavior issues qualify as low-level summary or misdemeanor delinquent offenses. When students are accepted to the program, a Department of Human Services worker visits the student's home and assesses the family's needs and can recommend after-school prevention services. Intensive Prevention Services providers work with the youth and their families in a 90-day program, presenting positive role models and enhancing school, life, and social skills. In the first full year of the program, 2014-2015, arrests dropped by 54 percent compared to the year prior, and in the second-year arrests dropped 64 percent.<sup>27</sup> Further evaluation of the program is currently being conducted.<sup>28</sup>

### ***New York State Promise Zones***

The Promise Zone program is funded by a grant from the New York State Office of Mental Health. Promise zones are communities where local school districts partner with state and local child-serving agencies to improve learning environments and engage students. Goals of the program include improved attendance, decreased suspensions, improved academic achievement, decreased referrals to special education and increased family engagement in school.<sup>29</sup> The three components of the program include:

1. External Change Partner to coach participating schools and link them to resources.
2. The School Support Team and Social Worker.
3. A Community Services Support Network and a Mental Health Partner.

The program uses an intervention called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS, a framework for helping schools adopt evidence-based interventions to enhance academic and social

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<sup>25</sup> "Program Profile: Juvenile Breaking the Cycle (JBTC) Program (Lane County, Oregon)". National Institute of Justice. July 11, 2016. <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=478>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Melamed, Samantha. "How a Philly cop broke the school-to-prison pipeline". *The Inquirer*. September, 26, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> "Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court: Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program." United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <http://www.stoneleighfoundation.org/sites/default/files/SchoolDiversionProgram-Spreads.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Bandison et. al. "The Promise Zone: How to Implement Cross-System Behavioral Support Services in High-Need Schools" (paper presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Behavioral Health, Tampa, FL, March 7, 2017).

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behavior outcomes for all students.<sup>30</sup>

A presentation by staff from the Visiting Nurse Services of New York Community Mental Health Services, the NYC Promise Zone Community Mental Health Partner, summarizes the outcomes of the program.<sup>31</sup> Outcomes show Promise Zone students had improved school attendance from 2014 to 2016 and the number of school days gained was the equivalent of 2.52 years. The majority of students also showed academic improvements in the English language and math. Between 2011 and 2016 there were also functional status improvements – a 19 percent improvement in problem presentation and an 11 percent improvement in risk behaviors.

### **WISE Arrest Diversion Program**

Set in a high school and two middle schools in Utica, New York, the WISE program diverts youth from arrest by offering targeted after-school programming, tutoring, mentoring, attendance checks, and daily check-ins, among other interventions.<sup>32</sup> The program targets students who have committed low-level arrestable offenses on school property. A WISE diversion coordinator stationed at the school advocates for diversion and reviews the case for eligibility with a team including a school administrator and representatives from the Utica Police Department. In this way, the program influences the schools to offer an alternative to discipline in addressing student conduct. Administrators have more flexibility in how they address low-level infractions and School Resource Officers (SROs) become a partner in the diversionary team.

A pre-and post-program evaluation found notable reductions in in-school arrests, although a cause-effect relationship is difficult to prove due to confounding factors.<sup>33</sup>

## **Colorado Programs**

### **Denver Public Schools Policy**

DPS recently announced plans to eliminate out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for preschool through third grade students, except in exceptionally serious incidents.<sup>34</sup>

### **Denver Public Safety Youth Programs**

Denver has several prevention, intervention and diversion programs aimed at reducing crime and violence in the community.<sup>35</sup> Programs with outcomes data listed on the Department of Public Safety's website include:

- **Municipal diversion** which targets youth in violation of city laws such as trespassing, curfew violations and shoplifting and diverts them from the traditional court process. In 2011 the recidivism rate for program participants was reportedly 11 percent compared to 22 percent for youth not completing the program.
- **PACE (Promoting Academics & Character Education)** which aims to promote academic

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<sup>30</sup> "PBIS Frequently Asked Questions" . OSEP Technical Assistance Center. November 26, 2010 [http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/PBIS\\_Q&A.pdf](http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/PBIS_Q&A.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Bandison, et. al. "The Promise Zone" 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Fader et.al. "A Promising Approach to Narrowing the School-to-Prison Pipeline: The WISE Arrest Diversion Program," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 13(2015): 123-142.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ann Schimke, "Denver Public Schools takes strong stand against suspension and expulsion in early grades". *Chalkbeat*. March 15, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> "Intervention & Diversion Programs" Denver Department of Public Safety, <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/department-of-safety/intervention-prevention/juvenile-intervention-diversion/intervention-diversion-programs.html>.

success, life skills development, and a reduction in violent or negative behaviors among youth with significant behavioral problems. A 2012-2013 report showed positive program outcomes, including a significant reduction in behavioral issue referrals following program participation.<sup>36</sup>

- **Attendance Mediation Workshops (AMWs)** are targeted at preventing continued or increased absenteeism. When compared to Truancy Court participants, AMW participants were enrolled in school at a higher rate (34% vs 93%, respectively). AMW participation costs are dramatically lower than Truancy Court with AMW costs of \$175 per student, and Truancy Court costs of \$1,579 per student.

### ***El Paso County Department of Human Services***

The El Paso County Department of Human Services aims to address the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency by supporting economic self-sufficiency, assisting youth and children in need, protecting at-risk or neglected children, and providing direct services.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Partners in Parenting (PIP)***

The PIP program, created in 1990, uses two six hour workshops to expose enrolled parents to knowledge, skills, and techniques that can help prevent youth involvement in drug use and misuse.<sup>38</sup> According to a description of the program on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) website, approximately 600 individuals were trained to implement the program across Colorado. The program proved promising for improving parenting behaviors, with parents reporting a statistically significant increase in involvement with their children; appropriate discipline, monitoring, or supervising their children; and setting clear expectations for their children, compared with parents in the control group.<sup>39</sup>

## **Potential Impact on Health Outcomes**

### **Potential Opportunities to Impact Health by Preventing Early Incarceration**

It is widely understood that education improves economic opportunity, which impacts health. Once a child has contact with the juvenile justice system, chances of expulsion and transfer to other schools are higher which threatens the child's chance of completing school. By preventing early incarceration and keeping children in school, children are more likely to experience positive life outcomes. In the famous Perry Preschool Project, African American children living in poverty and assessed to be at high risk of school failure were provided a high-quality preschool education. Compared to the control group, at age 40 these children were 46 percent less likely to have served time in jail or prison and had a 33 percent lower arrest rate for violent crimes.<sup>40</sup> They were also 26 percent less likely to have received government assistance and had a 42 percent higher median monthly income.<sup>41</sup> A benefit/cost analysis found a seven to 12-dollar benefit of the program per dollar of cost.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> "Promoting Academics and Character Education Program (PACE) Findings for 11-12/12-13 Participants". OMNI Institute. <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/744/documents/2012-13%20combined%20PACE%20report.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> "America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline". Children's Defense Fund. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/cradle-prison-pipeline-report-2007-full-lowres.pdf>. . October 2007.

<sup>38</sup> "Partners in Parenting (PIP)". SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. November 20, 2015. <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ProgramProfile.aspx?id=17#hide1>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> "Social Programs that Work: Perry Preschool Project", Coalition for Evidence-based Policy, <http://evidencebasedprograms.org/1366-2/65-2>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Heckman et. al. "The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool program". *Journal of Public Economics*,94 (2010), 114-128

The prevention of the cradle-to-prison pipeline can also have broader societal impacts on public health as described below.

### ***Impact on Chronic Conditions, Substance Abuse and Mental Health***

When an individual enters a jail or prison they are exposed to other individuals with infectious and chronic diseases, substance abuse, and mental health problems. As a result, people leaving jail may contribute to health inequities in the communities they are re-entering. A study looking at the experiences in the year after release of 491 adolescent males and 476 adult women returning home from New York City jails found more than half the young men were using marijuana and a quarter of the women were using cocaine, crack or heroin.<sup>43</sup> The study also found that nearly two in five women reported mental health problems and reported high rates of emergency room use.<sup>44</sup> Another study found that jail and prison inmates have higher odds of chronic illnesses and communicable disease like hepatitis when compared with the general population.<sup>45</sup> By decreasing the number of adolescents and youth introduced into jails and preventing associated behaviors, interventions could potentially decrease the community's exposure to chronic conditions, substance abuse and mental illness.

Another study looked at neighborhoods with high levels of incarceration and found the public mental health impact of mass incarceration likely extends to others in the community.<sup>46</sup> Individuals living in neighborhoods with high prison admission rates were more likely to have major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder than those in communities with low prison admission rates.<sup>47</sup>

These studies suggest that initiatives that target prevention of initial and subsequent youth incarceration could have a beneficial impact not only for the youth themselves but the health of the society around them.

### ***Impact on Violence***

Several studies have shown that students who obtain school-based prevention programs can experience reduced aggressive and disruptive behavior. One example is the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP), which is a school-based prevention program that combines parent training, teacher training, and skills training for children. The program was first implemented in 1981 and included students in grades one through six in select public schools. At age 18, participants in the intervention were found to be significantly less likely to have committed violent delinquent acts than the control group.<sup>48</sup>

Community-based programs have also shown some success in lowering levels of violence. An evaluation of the Communities That Care (CTC) program showed that young people in CTC communities were 25 percent less likely to have initiated delinquent behavior than the control population and 31 percent less likely to have engaged in delinquent acts like assault and theft.<sup>49</sup> Denver participates in this initiative through the Denver Youth Violence Prevention Center which has a goal to reduce violence among 10 to

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<sup>43</sup> Freudenberg et. al. "Coming Home From Jail: The Social and Health Consequences of Community Reentry for Women, Male Adolescents, and Their Families and Communities". *American Journal of Public Health*. 98(2008): S191-S202.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Binswanger, Krueger and Steiner JF. "Prevalence of chronic medical conditions among jail and prison inmates in the USA compared with the general population" *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 63 (2009): 912-919.

<sup>46</sup> Hatzenbuehler et. al. "The Collateral Damage of Mass Incarceration: Risk of Psychiatric Morbidity Among Nonincarcerated Residents of High-Incarceration Neighborhoods." *American Journal of Public Health*. 105(2015): 138-143.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> "Seattle Social Development Project", Promising Practices Network, <http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=64>.

<sup>49</sup> Brandon Welsh, Anthony Braga and Christopher Sullivan. "Serious Youth Violence and Innovative Prevention: On the Emerging Link Between Public Health and Criminology", *Justice Quarterly*, 31(2014): 500-523.

24-year-olds in the Montbello and Northeast Park Hill communities.<sup>50</sup>

The literature does not find a consistent correlation between youth incarceration and violence prevention. An analysis by the Justice Policy Institute suggests that seven of ten states studied that reduced the number of youth in juvenile justice facilities saw a decrease in the total number of violent offenses reported to law enforcement.<sup>51</sup>

A review of the available evidence demonstrates that public health interventions that keep youth in school and in the community could contribute to decreasing the levels of societal violence.

## Conclusion

After decades of implementing discriminatory zero tolerance discipline policies, communities are beginning to implement interventions that better identify and address early childhood adversity and offer alternatives to incarceration for youth expressing delinquent behavior. While the evidence is not clear on which interventions can truly disrupt the cradle-to-prison pipeline, there are promising practices that, when implemented with fidelity, are likely to have an impact not only on the youth directly served, but also the communities in which they live. Research shows that interventions that keep youth in school and outside of detention can prevent the spread of disease and slow the increase in violent behavior.

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<sup>50</sup> “Youth Violence Prevention Center – Denver”. <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/stepstosuccess/>. University of Colorado Boulder Institute of Behavioral Science Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence 2017

<sup>51</sup> The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense”. Justice Policy Institute. “May 2009. [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09\\_05\\_rep\\_costsofconfinement\\_jj\\_ps.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/09_05_rep_costsofconfinement_jj_ps.pdf).