



# TRENTON PREVENTION POLICY BOARD

*Evidence-based Community Solutions...*

*to promote positive*

*youth development*

*and reduce juvenile crime*

JUNE 2012

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# TRENTON PREVENTION POLICY BOARD

## OVERVIEW

*(TPPB) is a grassroots effort that aims to reduce juvenile crime and promote positive youth development. Local stakeholders gather together to share their knowledge about policies, programs, services, and best practices so they can make informed recommendations to municipal, county and state officials.*

*Supported by the New Jersey Attorney General's Office of Community Justice and facilitated by The College of New Jersey's Bonner Center for Civic & Community Engagement, the TPPB is part of statewide effort known as the Municipal Crime Prevention Initiative.*

*Working in partnership with the Bloustein School at Rutgers University, local boards also operate in Newark, Asbury Park, Camden and Vineland.*

*Like the TPPB, these boards recognize that community empowerment and multilevel collaboration are needed to positively address local issues of crime and delinquency.*

## *TPPB Steering Committee Members*

- ❖ Darrell Armstrong
- ❖ Marygrace Billek
- ❖ Heather Camp
- ❖ Alison Daks
- ❖ Patrick Donohue
- ❖ John Duarte
- ❖ Alexis Durlacher
- ❖ Penny Ettinger
- ❖ Samuel Frisby
- ❖ Elizabeth Johnson
- ❖ Lois Krause
- ❖ Wanda Moore
- ❖ Jayson Rogers
- ❖ Ralph Rivera, Jr.
- ❖ Robert Taylor

### *Lead Writer*

- ❖ Professor Diane Bates



# INTRODUCTION



The idea of developing local Policy Planning Boards to review policy and practice as it relates to the needs of at risk youth in a specific set of New Jersey cities was originally conceived by Attorney General Anne Milgram as part of the Governor's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods. Under the Title V Community Prevention Grants Program, "This program, working from a research based framework, focuses on reducing risks and enhancing protective factors to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system." The intention was to gather the leadership of the cities and counties with youth at most risk and offer them support and guidance to engage in an interdisciplinary assessment of risks and resources and to use this to develop data-driven policies and decision making to address these issues. The Office of the Attorney General brought together the leadership of the City of Trenton (administration, police, youth services, social services) and Mercer County (human services, youth services, mental health) for two days in June 2009 to review a specific set of data as it related to community demographics, youth violence, high school graduation, community engagement, and employment and to charge a team to convene to address these critical areas of need in Trenton.

The Trenton Policy Planning Board (TPPB) was born on August 4, 2009 under the leadership of the Trenton Police Department and was co-chaired by the Trenton Police Director Irv Bradley, the Trenton Health and Human Service Director Carolyn Lewis-Spruill, and the Mercer Human Services Director Marygrace Billek and was supported by the Rand Institute out of Rutgers Bloustein School for Public Policy. Forty community members representing all aspects of youth social service provision, including police, probation, the Juvenile Justice Commission, community members, advocates, and youth employment and education providers, gathered to fulfill the needs of the TPPB. This group participated in the initial data walk and identification of Trenton's high priority community needs: domestic violence, youth employment, education, and juvenile crime.

To address these identified needs, the group developed four subcommittees which would address the specific data points. Members from the general planning board joined each of the subcommittees, and a staff person from RAND supported each working group. Those data points are reflected by the goals and direction taken by each subcommittee and the work described herein.

The City of Trenton has since undergone enormous change, as has the Trenton Policy Planning Board. In July 2010, a new mayor, the Honorable Mayor Tony M. Mack, was elected. In addition, the Attorney General's Office asked The College of New Jersey's Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement to assume the role of the lead support agency in the fall of 2011. More recently, the city's newly appointed Police Director (Ralph Rivera, Jr.) joined the Board as one of the co-chairs of the entire initiative.

The following is the result of three years of labor, evaluation, and planning by a committed group of community members who are intent upon improving the outcomes for at risk youth and families in the City of Trenton. It includes 25 recommendations that are the result of joining community and campus expertise, as each working group included not only residents, non-profit professionals, governmental and school employees—but professors and students from the College as well. As a result, each recommendation was only advanced after thoughtful deliberation and, when relevant, a review of the literature and evidence by a leading academic.

As the TPPB moves forward, it recognizes that it has only begun to scratch the surface in terms of learning about the needs of the city's youth—and what new programs, policies, or practices might be beneficial. The participants are committed to continuing this collaboration and with the release of this report will now focus on two goals. The Board will continue to review the evidence and make recommendations to policy makers and administrators on an annual basis. In addition, the participants will also strive to implement some of the ideas in this first report themselves—as a broad range of organizations are at the table that have the ability and the will to make meaningful changes to help the young people in the city.

Introduction

Working Groups

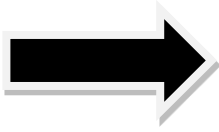
Domestic Violence

Education

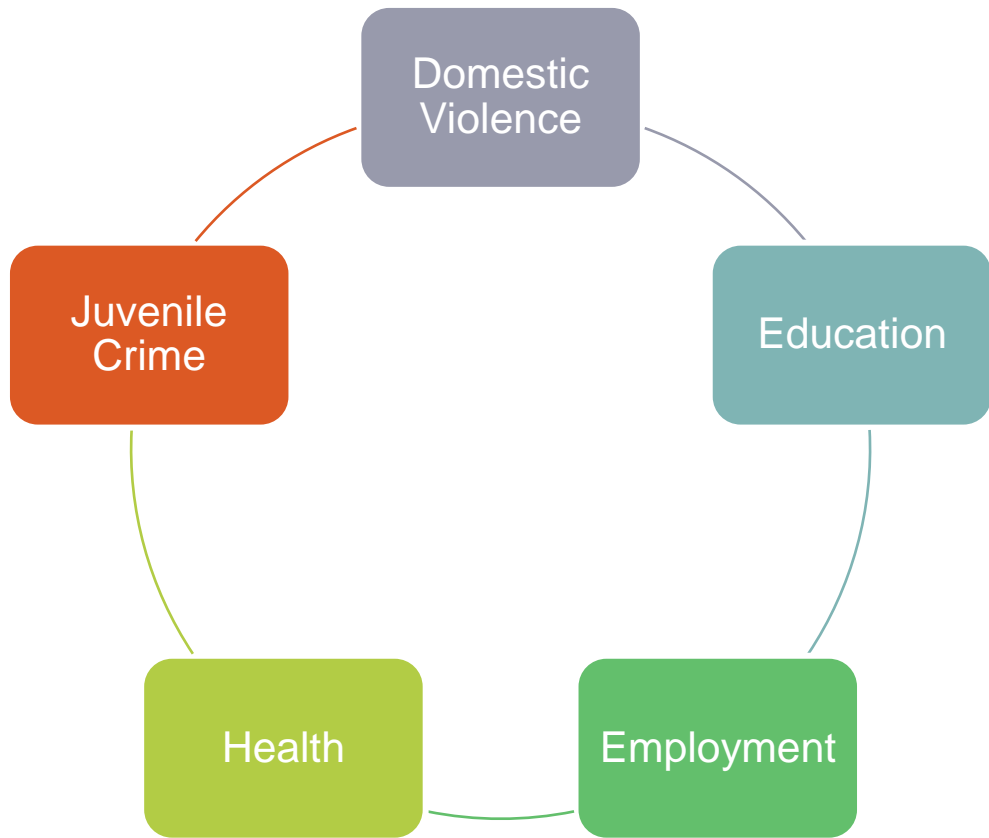
Employment

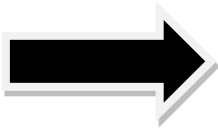
Health

Juvenile Crime



# Working Groups





# Domestic Violence Recommendations

## **Bystander Intervention**

In general, men are less likely to intervene as bystanders to interpersonal violence. This is linked to how men think about and define masculinity, but apart from general agreement that masculine gender norms are problematic, little evidence exists to suggest how to modify these norms to promote more intervention by men. In one study, an antiviolence campaign recruited local male community leaders and residents to become ambassadors against interpersonal violence in their places of employment, their family, among their peers, and elsewhere in the community (McMahon and Dick 2011). The men in the program went through an eight hour training period and subsequently reported frequent use of intervention skills.

The TPPB Working Group on Domestic Violence encourages the development of a program to teach adolescents and adults who find themselves in risky situations how to intervene in a way that is culturally and age appropriate. Possible programs may include school assemblies that separate boys and girls, perhaps those that merge the idea of organizing critical conversations with the delivery of theatrical productions. Workshops designed to train trainers from a variety of community organizations to promote bystander intervention should also be considered. At this point, however, programs that have successfully implemented intervention training must be carefully reviewed before moving forward with an intervention initiative.

## **City-wide Domestic Violence Public Relations Campaign**

Although violence by intimate partners has decreased in the past decade, it is still a problem affecting many women. For instance, interpersonal violence (IPV) accounts for 22 percent of violent crimes against women between 1993 and 1998 (NCVS). Experts have suggested that public awareness campaigns would be helpful both to inform abused women about strategies for getting help, and to potentially change public attitudes and norms about IPV (Cambell and Manganello 2006).

Public education campaigns can reduce domestic violence by engaging abusive men and preventing the reoccurrence or escalation of violence against women. In one study, approximately two-thirds of the male batterers identified indicated that they had sought help regarding the problems in their intimate relationships (Campbell, Jaffe, and Kelly 2010); however, only half of them actually received help that addressed their violent behaviors. Furthermore, of those participants who received help, only one-quarter found the help to be useful or effective. Nearly half of the men indicated that they did not know who to ask for help, and even among those who did ask for help, they found that the only support available was for women who were experiencing domestic violence.

Additional research on public health campaigns demonstrate that while such campaigns are effective, they vary in both impact and cost. Print media campaigns are relatively expensive, but have greater impact. Electronic social media is affordable, but has limited impact. Without evidence that information will reach broad populations capable of creating the desired change, the TPPB Working Group on Domestic Violence suggests public relations campaigns should be approached with caution. There may be some possibilities for synergy with stakeholders who have experience in public relations, but this has not been fully pursued at this time. Future suggestions include reaching out to TCNJ departments with expertise in this area, as in the marketing program.

### **Coaching Boys Into Men Curriculum with Coaches**

Young people involved in athletic activities where coaches are present are already involved in a mentored activity that can be enhanced to promote healthier relationships. San Francisco's Futures Without Violence has designed the Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) curriculum that illustrates ways to model respect and promote healthy relationships and choices among young men. The CBIM Card Series instructs coaches on how to incorporate the philosophies associated with teamwork, integrity, fair play, and respect into their practice and strategy routine. Given the existing relationships between the TCNJ Bonner Center and coaches at Trenton Central High School, a CBIM program appears to be a natural fit.

Reverend Darrell Armstrong of Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton has advocated for the implementation of a CBIM program. The TPPB agrees that this should be pursued, with the caveat that it will only work if coaches are appropriately trained and willing to implement the program. This also requires full support of the Athletic Director. Futures Without Violence has yet to make assessments on the efficacy of the program available, so its implementation in Trenton should also be considered a pilot program, and thus be evaluated carefully.

### **Media Literacy in After-School Programs**

Early television viewing has been linked to subsequent aggressive behavior including criminal violence, even after controlling for previous aggressive behavior, childhood neglect, family income, neighborhood violence, parental education and psychiatric disorders (Cantor and Wilson 2003, Bushman and Anderson 2001). Media literacy education to promote health among youth involves them in a critical examination of media messages that promote risky behaviors and influence their perceptions and practices. Media literacy interventions may be useful tools in prevention initiatives (Halliwel, et al 2011). A positive evaluative approach to media literacy increased adolescents' media skepticism and had crucial influences on other key decision-making process (Chen 2011). Although most research supports the efficacy of such initiatives, media literacy programs are most effective when combined with a cognitive activity. There also appears to be an age-related effect, with older children having better results.

Womanspace currently offers the Media Literacy Project's curriculum, which facilitates the deconstruction of clips from television shows, music videos, commercials, and magazine advertisements to promote social justice and increase healthy communication. Womanspace has committed to providing this programming to interested partners. After-school programming is considered to be a perfect place where a captive audience of youth can be reached to influence and impact their thinking as it relates to domestic violence.

In Spring 2012, Womanspace developed and implemented a media literacy program with the Academic Sports Academy (ASA) at Hedgepeth-Williams School, as a result of their connection to the TPPB and TCNJ's Bonner Scholar program. In this initial pilot program, it was determined that the Media Literacy Project's curriculum is geared towards a slightly older age group (11-15 year olds) than are typically served by ASA. Thus, the recommendation after this pilot program is that more advanced planning will be required to identify and attract more age-appropriate youths, such as older siblings of students enrolled in ASA. Alison Daks of Womanspace is already working with the staff at ASA to begin planning for Fall 2012.

#### **Required Training for Mentoring Programs**

Since much of the juvenile justice work is focused on mentoring programs, the Working Group on Domestic Violence wants to ensure that mentors are well prepared for this responsibility. We recommend that mentoring programs offer on-going trainings for their mentors. In addition, mentors should be trained on how to properly respond if a mentee reports having to deal with domestic violence and sexual assault at home or in their personal life.

To this end, City and County funders should include in requests for proposals (RFPs) that mentoring programs must include some key components and a comprehensive training program that includes (but is not limited to): a long term commitment by mentors, adequate mentor supervision and support, an emphasis on healthy relationships, understanding boundaries, child development, reporting obligations, bystander intervention, domestic violence, gender role exploration, and the relevant resources that are available in the area. In addition, the people who supervise mentors must be knowledgeable about laws, procedures, and local resources.

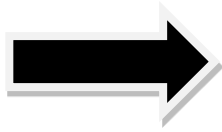
Already several area organizations, such as Womanspace, offer education and training to the community on domestic and interpersonal violence. Early indications from government administrators suggest that a training requirement is a feasible and desirable part of future RFPs. However, this recommendation did not make the priority list of the Working Group on Domestic Violence, as it may be more relevant to those who are offering mentoring programs and would undoubtedly fail to address domestic violence issues except in cases where people are already involved in formal mentoring programs.



### **Theatrical-Based Critical Conversation Series**

The Millhill Child and Family Development Center organizes a group of adolescent performers, known as Trenton P.E.E.R.S., to perform role-playing vignettes to other young people at schools, places of worship, and community organizations. These vignettes feature issues that young people in the area actually face, including sexual harassment, dating violence, bullying, and violence prevention. According to their website, Trenton P.E.E.R.S. productions are viewed by as many as 1,500 individuals each year. Theatrical productions have been used elsewhere to assist in youth identity development and prevent dating violence (Hammock 2011). SCREAM Theater (Student Challenging Reality and Educating Against Myths (SCREAM Theater) at Rutgers University performs roughly 70 interactive and educational performances each year on a variety of topics related to interpersonal violence. These forums can use performing arts and pop culture (such as feature films) as a way to attract individuals to participate in these critical conversations.

Each of the programs cited above provide examples of how community organizations can develop and implement education forums that allow residents to discuss domestic violence issues in a safe environment. Given that the Trenton P.E.E.R.S. program is already institutionalized, the Domestic Violence Working Group recommends further study of this program as a means for developing discussions on domestic violence issues. The Committee also recommends that public showings of feature films may be another way to attract community members into these important conversations.



# Education Recommendations

## Data-Driven Policy Making Project

High School dropout rates are one of the focal points in the minds of all individuals hoping for prosperity of the future in any community. The Trenton community is concerned about what is perceived to be a high drop-out rate from Trenton Central High School. Failing to complete high school is linked to fewer job opportunities and lower future earnings, and contributes to delinquency and criminal behavior. The New Jersey Department of Education released information indicating that Trenton had the worst graduation rate in the state in 2011, with less than half of students graduating (47.7 percent). Trenton has a variety of programs that seek to identify and assist students at risk for dropping out. What the city lacks, however, is a centralized system for identifying at-risk students and assessing intervention programs already in place. Development of these initiatives will allow the school district to more effectively and efficiently achieve its goal of encouraging its students to graduate from high school.

Data-driven educational policy refers to “teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing various types of data, including input, process, outcome and satisfaction data, to guide a range of decisions to help improve the success of students and schools” (Marsh, Payne, and Hamilton 2006). While the concept seems new, it is not. In the 1980s there were debates about measurement driven instruction (Popham 1987) and a decade before that there were state requirements to use outcome data for school improvement planning (Massell 2001). However, the federal No Child Left Behind Act ushered in a new level of intensity around these issues. But just because data exists, does not mean that decision-makers have access to that data when designing and reviewing programs.

To this end, the Newark Public Schools has already initiated the Multiple Pathways to Graduation program. Over the course of three years (2011-2013), the Economic Development Research Group at Rutgers University-Newark will help the Newark school district build its capacity to track, analyze, and instrumentally use data to support its Multiple Pathways to Graduation. They will develop a profile of the district’s student body, including a comparison of graduation rates across district programs and schools. They will also develop an “at-risk student measure” that considers academic, social, and environmental factors that makes individual students more likely to drop out. Newark’s public schools can then use this information to focus its resources on those programs that produce the best results.

The TPPB supports the current efforts of Superintendent Roy Broach, School Board President Toby Sanders, Principal Marc Maurice of Trenton Central High School and other Trenton public school staff to solicit a proposal from Dr. Deborah E. Ward at the Economic Development Research Group to replicate Newark's program in Trenton. The proposal has been drafted for consideration, with an aim of implementing a one-year program at the start of the 2012-13 academic year.

### **Higher Education Counselor Support Project**

In 2010, a study of the role of school counselors in Chicago public schools yielded four key findings: (1) high school counselors play an important role in promoting student academic achievement; (2) counselors affect how students plan, prepare, search, apply and enroll in college; (3) counselors play a vital role in helping students successfully transition into high school; and (4) an implementation gap exists across high schools in the organization and delivery of a comprehensive guidance program, thus advantaging some students and disadvantaging others (Lapan and Harrington 2010). Lower performing schools (as measured by test scores, fewer students in AP classes, fewer seniors applying to multiple colleges) are places where the counselors are often burdened with non-guidance tasks. These tasks include photocopying, mailing deficiency notices, serving as testing coordinators, subbing in classrooms, and administering discipline.

Adolescence is a stressful period all on its own. Vulnerability to stress is attributed to developmental changes including physical changes associated with puberty, role identification, cognitive changes, and school transitions. In addition, adolescents are engaged in the tasks of separation and individuation. Normal developmental stress may be exacerbated by increased incidence of divorce and single parent families, growing rates of poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, intra-family violence, child abuse, and exposure to violent crime. When thinking of the importance of counselors in high schools, we must consider that many students may be arriving at school struggling with loss or trauma.

Given these circumstances, this committee proposed and started working on forming a partnership between schools in Trenton and their higher education colleagues to enhance the capacity of guidance staff and provide services to students. In Fall 2012, a pilot program will be launched in which graduate students in TCNJ's master's in counselor education program will provide 700 hours of service at a Trenton middle school. This program benefits Trenton schools and students by providing additional staff to assist with the substantive counseling tasks that have been demonstrated to lead to student successes. Moreover, TCNJ counselor education students will receive valuable and mandated field experience under the supervision of a full-time school counselor. The recommendation calls for this program to be expanded to multiple campuses citywide, including the main campus of the high school, and the delivery of up to 7000 hours of service to the Trenton public schools.

### The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Transition Project

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2005) reports that there was a loss of 3.75 million students (10.5%) between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 2005. This represents students who were not promoted to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and those who chose to drop out before 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This particular problem is more pronounced in high poverty schools where 40 percent of students drop out after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, in contrast to 27 percent in low-poverty districts. The National High School Center reports that supporting transitions into high school is an important strategy for retaining these students (Kennelly and Monrad 2007). Some of the strategies outlined are the creation of 9<sup>th</sup> grade academies and other transition supports that may begin before high school. Reents (2002) reports that, “in schools in which transition programs are fully operational, researchers saw a dropout rate of 8% while schools without transition programs averaged 24%”.

Currently, a transition program exists to TCHS, but it is voluntary so it may not serve the students most at risk. Following the recommendation of Principal Marc Maurice, the TPPB Education Working Group proposes that all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Trenton public schools participate in transition programs that are informed by best practices. Programs may include visits to the high school while students are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, meeting high school counselor while in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and participation in transitional programs. These programs should follow best practices established locally and elsewhere and should be meaningfully assessed by measuring retention rates at the high school.

In addition, the District should assign a specific transition guidance counselor to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders who School Board President Toby Sanders suggests are the most at-risk of dropping out of high school (approximately 14 percent of each middle school population). Ideally, these individuals would be assigned an appropriate mentor or mentors (academic and otherwise), coordinated through the Trenton Mentoring Coalition.

Introduction

Working  
Groups

Domestic  
Violence

Education

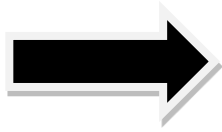
Employment

Health

Juvenile  
Crime

### **Future Initiatives**

The Education Working group has two future initiatives that merit mention, but have not yet been fully developed. The Customer Service Professional Development initiative would offer training for public school personnel that would incorporate a “customer service” component in professional development, including topics such as communication and body language, conflict resolution, bilingual/bicultural communication, and a website update plan. The Next Generation Excellent Principles initiative encourages the School Board to develop a program to find and train the best administrators for Trenton schools. This would require research into current policies and training plans of the district, as well as a review of best practices. Findings from the Economic Development Research Group at Rutgers University-Newark’s study of the Trenton school district should also be incorporated.



# Employment Recommendations

## Expungement Education Services

When individuals decide to leave criminal behavior behind to pursue more legitimate activities, they may find that their juvenile or criminal record resurfaces in background checks and creates real barriers to employment. In contrast, a person whose conviction is expunged can lawfully answer “no” if asked whether he/she has been convicted of a crime. Being able to secure employment is the best way to ensure an easier transition back into civil life, and greatly reduces the risk of reoffending.

Expungement statutes allow individuals to clear older convictions and arrests. Expungement is a broader remedy for juvenile adjudications, and can include the entire juvenile record if, after five years there were no subsequent convictions, none of the adjudications were for non-expungeable crimes, and no adult convictions were ever expunged or dismissed after completion of supervision or diversion. One-time drug possession and use adjudications can be expunged after one year, if certain conditions are met. Juvenile records can also be sealed, either by the court or the person who is the subject of the records, if two years have passed and there have been no subsequent convictions.

Marion Rogers Lewis, who is an attorney and serves as the Executive Director of the Youth Advocacy Program has already provided several pro bono expungement classes in the area and has offered to continue to do so in coordination with the TPPB. Over the long term, the TPPB Working Group on Employment recommends the establishment of a center where a variety of services concerning expungement would be provided. These services would work towards educating young people on expungement eligibility, courses focused on the subject of expungement, and the overall processes of expungement in the State of New Jersey. The center would also provide legal services, including advice, to young people. To this end, the TPPB Employment Working Group recommends the investigation of an expungement clinic in concert with a team of TCNJ pre-law or other local higher education institution students to work on specific cases.

### Homeboy Industries

Jesuit priest Father Greg Boyle was working in East Los Angeles in the late 1980s, hoping to help young people who have been involved in gang life to become healthy, productive members of society. In 1988, after a period of trial and error and with significant community input, he developed Homeboy Industries (HBI) as a comprehensive job placement, training, and education program. The program offers a wide range of services and resources including mental health education and treatment; life skills training and alternative education; job training, experience, and placement; tattoo removal; and legal services, including expungement. Young people who want to leave gang life are admitted to the program after a formal review process that includes staff at the highest level of the organization. A case manager works with participants to find the programs that they need. Many members of HBI are placed in businesses run by HBI, including a bakery, café, and clothing store. In these businesses members gain work experience and develop the “soft” skills that they will need in future employment.

HBI has been touted as highly successful by media organizations, educators, and law-makers. Moreover, HBI has recently started an evaluation in conjunction with a research team from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Their research indicates that the program facilitates positive contributions to society because it gives members a sense of hope and attachment to their communities and the wider society. Both hope and attachment are foundations for self-esteem, self-efficacy, managing emotions, coping, and an orientation to help others (Leap, Franke, Christie, and Bonis 2010).

Robert Taylor, Chief of Youth Services for Mercer County, heard Father Greg Boyle speak at the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Conference in 2009 and was intrigued about bringing a similar program to New Jersey. This interest was reinforced by other community/TPPB members at a forum held at the Bloustein School in which panelists from California discussed youth initiatives, including the creation of businesses that seek specifically to hire ex-offenders.

The TPPB Employment working group thus recommends that that an RFP be developed by a foundation or other major funding institution for the creation of a social entrepreneurship site, similar to that of "Homeboy Industries". This could provide the platform for a local organization such as Isles, Inc. to host such a program.

### Job Coach Program

Trenton's youth face a variety of barriers to secure employment, such as a lack of transportation, support systems, role models, a stable home life, and working people in their lives. Experience drawn from actual work experience and job placement programs in the city indicates that, as a consequence of this, many of Trenton's youth are unaware of or unable to navigate a work environment. They may not have any adults in their lives who work in professional environments or who can guide or coach the youth about job expectations, communication, rules, and behavior. When they face challenging situations in the workplace, youth may not have the tools to deal with conflict with a co-worker or supervisor in a respectful and diplomatic way. Hence, youth will quit jobs, walk out, or get in fights that often result in termination. Moreover, supervisors may have difficulty navigating these challenges in such a way to help youth maintain employment. Given these circumstances, a job coach program could improve employment retention, which would benefit young workers and provide incentives for employers to hire young people participating in work experience and job placement programs.

Bill Rogers, a professor from Rutgers University, has done extensive research on employment for minorities and minority youth in New Jersey's urban areas and recommends the use of job coaches for promoting employment and retention. Rogers emphasizes the value of recruiting job coaches, as opposed to "mentors". Job coaches are more focused on the specific task at hand and do not have to be a role model in any area aside from the work environment. Ideally, youth are paired with coaches in a similar field that the youth is pursuing, in order to prepare the youth for work in that particular professional environment. In the beginning, coaches meet with the youth more frequently, and then less frequently as the work experience program continues. Coaches also act as mediators for employment supervisors if conflicts arise with program participants. For years, job coach programs have been successfully used for youth with mental health issues and disabilities. In addition, they have also been utilized for various welfare-to-work programs (Pavetti and Strong 2001).

Locally, The TPPB Employment group supports the development of a local job coach program for young men and women entering the workforce. Job coaches would interact with their mentees on a regular basis and provide guidance on a range of real workplace issues (such as professionalism, attire, conflict resolution, and receiving constructive criticism). Aaron Samuels, Youth Development Manager from the One-Stop Center, has proposed that his organization would be a natural fit for developing this program, particularly given its partnership with the Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce.



## Work Experience Program

“Companies don’t want to hire people without experience,” explains Kendall Williams, a participant in the Mercer County One Stop Center’s Youth Employment Partnership, to the *Times of Trenton*. Williams’s concern is echoed by the TPPB Employment Working Group, which seeks to consider how to develop sustainable employment programs given Trenton’s current unemployment rate, estimated by the US Census Bureau in 2007 at 12.7 percent (roughly double that of New Jersey). Unemployment is particularly widespread among youth in Trenton (23 percent) and African Americans (19 percent). The goal of this initiative is to increase the opportunities available to Trenton’s youth that put them on a career track and to hone the soft skills that are so important to holding on to a job. To this end, it is recommended that employers in the public, private, and non-profit sectors could provide more work experience opportunities in concert with a Work Experience Program that integrates classroom work-readiness training and subsidized employment.

Similar programs with several different models have been implemented in New York City, Florida, and Milwaukee, WI. In New York City, the Work Experience Program (WEP) is a program of the Family Independence Administration section of the Human Resources Administration. The program is designed to place employable public assistance recipients into work experience assignments at sponsoring city agencies in exchange for receiving social service benefits. Florida’s statewide program also provides opportunities for youth to obtain public service work and training experience that benefit the public sector and community projects. Milwaukee’s Earn and Learn, administered by the County’s Workforce Investment Board, is designed to help young people make a successful transition to adulthood by providing opportunities to develop work-readiness skills while they earn wages working in government, community- and faith-based organizations and private sector businesses.

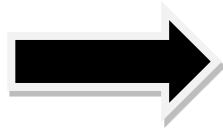
As a result of the Working Group’s deliberations, The Mercer County One Stop Center has made significant progress in establishing the Youth Employment Partnership, a pilot program designed to address this recommendation. This program addresses occupational training as well as job readiness and retention skills for participants, and funds an apprenticeship or internship with a local business. This program thus significantly reduces the risk to prospective employers while providing important applied experiences for the young program participants.

In partnership with the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce, the One Stop Center has begun to establish relationships with businesses that will provide the initial work experience opportunities for participants. The program’s first two participants, including Kendall Williams, quoted above, recently began a six month internship at Princeton Air Conditioning, Inc. in West Windsor, where they will shadow and be mentored by the company’s technicians. The One Stop center seeks to expand this program among young (18-21 year old), economically disadvantaged youth who graduate from their training program. The Employment Working Group also recommends the eventual development of a similar summer employment program designed for high school students

### Youth Employment Directory

The idea for an annual youth-oriented directory or “Youth Opportunity” (YO) Book is not a new one to the community of Trenton. During a discussion about how to inform local youth about employment resources and be aware of what local businesses and employers are willing to hire young residents, the group decided to resurrect the YO Book. In further discussion, it was suggested that the directory of services not only focus on employment opportunities, but also other workforce preparedness skill and job placement opportunity programs. This is consistent with best practices elsewhere; for example, the Youth Employment Institute in Portland, Oregon maintains a directory that incorporates education, employment, health, housing, and teen parenting resources. On their website, they have compiled all the best online resources and helpful links related to at-risk youth in their metropolitan area. Specifically, under employment they have categorized resources by job search, resume building, interviewing, and hot career choices, which were all topics that have been discussed in great detail during our group sessions.

Ideally, the YO Book would be available through social media and mobile applications, as well as distributed to students in paper copy each year. Existing directories do exist, such as the Youth Services Directory generated by Social Services offices at Trenton Central High School, but paper directories become quickly outdated. Ideally, an electronic YO Book could be updated in real time in order to have greater impact. It is also critical that the YO Book be housed and maintained by a neutral organization which is accessible to all who need it; Robert Taylor, Co-Chair of Employment Committee and Chief of Youth Services for Mercer County, has suggested the library system. The Employment Working Group also recommends working with college students involved in service programs to compile and maintain the directory.



# Health

## Recommendations

### The Health Working Group—Background

Well into the Trenton Prevention Policy Board's work it became evident that the health-related issues that strengthen or weaken a child's resilience, and are significant determinants to whether a child finds him or herself in the juvenile justice system, were not being addressed by any of the working groups. In response the TPPB formed the Health Working Group in the fall of 2011.

Addressing the relationship of how health impacts outcomes in juvenile crime is best done using a public health model of assessing risk factors including individual, social and community health factors that influence the outcomes of children and youth. Health risk factors range from individual risks, including mental health disorders and learning disabilities resulting from neurological differences, to social risks such as teen pregnancy, parenting and child abuse, to larger community factors such as the conditions of neighborhoods. While these, along with other specific health factors, are incredibly important and need to be addressed, it is important for the Health Working Group to assess these issues and determine where its focus should lie.

To date, the Group has identified, through debate based on the knowledge that each member brings and a brief scan of the research, several risk factors that stand out, which, if not addressed in a systematic way, will increase the risk of a child and populations of children entering the juvenile justice system. As a result the Health Working Group will look to develop recommendations in the following three areas.

### Individual Risk Factors

The research clearly shows that mental health disorders including substance abuse and learning disabilities with a neurological origin are very prevalent in the populations of youth who are incarcerated and/or on probation. A recent study conducted by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (2006) found that 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder and that 27 percent of youth experience disorders so severe that their ability to function is significantly impaired. The results of a 2000 national survey found that 38.6 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a specific learning disability, including but not limited to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dysgraphia and language-based learning differences including dyslexia. Individuals who have learning differences that go undiagnosed and/or unaddressed with appropriate educational services have an increased risk of failing in school.

### Social Risk Factors

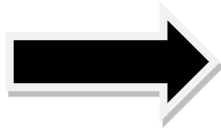
While many social factors such as family structure impact on a child's ability to succeed, one that stands out with this population is teenage pregnancy. Interestingly, it is not the teen mother who is at risk but her child. There is a direct correlation between age of the mother at the time of pregnancy and the child's risk of participating in delinquent behavior. The Adolescent Motherhood: Implications for the Juvenile Justice System study found that a delay in childbearing until the age of 20.5 years would, by itself, reduce the incarceration rate of those affected children by 13 percent.

### Community Risk Factors

It is widely known that community factors, including living in adverse neighborhoods without healthy conditions such as parks and access to good food options, have a direct correlation to childhood outcomes. In regards to general healthy living, a 2011 Mercer County Child Health Survey conducted by Children's Futures found that children living in the Trenton service area were more likely to be in fair or poor health compared to those outside at about seven percent to three percent, respectively. Similarly, children living in the Trenton service area were more likely to have asthma at 23.4 percent to 15.2 percent. Finally, children living in the Trenton service area were nearly twice as likely as children living outside that area to have visited the emergency room in the past year at 38.5 percent to 19.3 percent. One area of interest for the Health Working Group has been in Complete Streets policies, which formalize a community's intent to plan, design and maintain streets with pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists and freight vehicles in mind. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend Complete Streets as a strategy to prevent obesity as well as lower transportation costs for residents and foster stronger community interactions. The Trenton City Council recently passed a Complete Streets resolution to establish these policies by a collaboration of several community organizations. The Group will monitor its implementation and consider future recommendations in this area.

### Next Steps

As noted earlier, the goal of the Health Working Group is to continue its investigation of the literature, assess local needs through interviews with parents and practitioners and to complete its recommendations by December of 2012. As a result, this new Working Group will be at the same stage as the other four by next year. To accomplish this goal, the Group has produced a draft action plan that will govern its work over the next few months.



# Juvenile Crime Recommendations

## Faith-Based Organizations

At-risk young men do not have a location to escape trouble at night where they could interact with positive role models and engage in productive activities. The idea for safe havens makes intuitive sense – children who can escape gangs, drugs and violence will do so when they have meaningful alternatives. The idea for faith-based safe havens is to create centers in high crime areas where children can come to be protected from gangs and violence, but also be provided with recreational, educational, and social opportunities within the established moral community of a local religious institution. The faith-based connection is supported by leaders of the Mercer County Task Force, who claim that a belief in higher power and involvement in community service are the two tools that can best chip away at gang culture.

The effectiveness of faith-based safe havens is supported by advocacy organizations across the United states. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has compiled significant resources designed to assist in the development of faith-based safe havens. These resources draw from a variety of existing programs and provide guidance in terms of best practices. Surprisingly little academic research has been conducted to determine if safe havens are effective. One study published in 1996 did assess a safe haven called the Neutral Zone, open from 10 PM until 2 AM to 13 to 20 year olds, in a high crime city north of Seattle. The Neutral Zone offered participants recreation (basketball, movies, music), job preparation, free dinners and counseling. Youth participants indicated that the Neutral Zone did effectively offer them a place to escape gang pressures. Two-thirds of participants admitted that if the Neutral Zone were not available to them they would likely engage in illegitimate activities. Thurman, Giacomazzi, Reisig, and Mueller (1996) also found that calls to the police from the surrounding area increased during a six week period when the Neutral Zone was closed.

Faith-based organizations can also have a role in intervention with juvenile offenders. In Atlantic City, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has designed a program that draws on faith-based organizations to deter juvenile recidivism. In this program, juvenile offenders are given home detention (ankle bracelets), a job, a probation officer, and a Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) mentor. YAP mentors are drawn from local faith-based organizations and trained to intervene with youth offenders. Anecdotal reports from this program are promising.

Given the importance of faith-based organizations, the TPPB Juvenile Crime Working Group proposes two initiatives: a pilot safe haven in a high-crime area of Trenton and a research initiative. The pilot safe haven will need to be rigorously evaluated in terms of cost and effectiveness before pursuing the Working Group’s long-term goal of establishing a faith-based safe haven in each of the city’s four wards. The evaluation of Seattle’s Neutral Zone, for example, noted the need for sufficient staffing to maintain order and keep “troublemakers” out, as well as the importance of offering free food. The second initiative involves directed research on the role of faith-based institutions and clergy, and their role in preventing juvenile crime.

This research would involve a thorough, on-site investigation of the Atlantic City JDAI program, as well as the compilation of published research and institutional reports that identify the best practices and evidence-based suggestions on the role of faith-based organizations and clergy in juvenile crime prevention as well as from faith-based and other community organizations running safe haven programs.

### **Gun Buy-back Program**

Gun buy-back programs became popular in the United States during the 1990s. These programs typically offer two incentives for anyone who turns in a firearm during a limited time period at a publically announced location. Police officers accept the turned in firearms and then destroy them. The first incentive for owners to turn in firearms is an amnesty for anyone who turns in an illegally possessed firearm; the second incentive is typically cash or gift cards at a local department store or supermarket. The stated goal of these programs is typically to get illegal firearms “off the streets,” thereby reducing firearm violence.

In New Jersey, Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Irvington, and Bergen County (among others) have organized gun buy-back programs. On these days, law enforcement officials pay residents who turn in weapons, approximately \$100 for rifles and shotguns, and \$150 for handguns and assault weapons. In Elizabeth, a private donor provided \$30,000 for the effort, and 400 guns worth \$55,000 were collected over two days. The Bergen County Sherriff’s Office used drug forfeiture funds to buy back 700 weapons over one weekend. To date, neither Trenton nor Mercer County have organized such an event.

Although the prosecutor’s office recently agreed to help fund a gun buy-back initiative in Trenton, academic research into gun buy-back programs elsewhere suggests that they have limited impact on reducing violence. Callahan, Rivara and Koespell (1994) found no observable reduction in intentional or unintentional firearm use in a 1992 buy-back program in Seattle that offered a \$50 cash incentive and collected 1,172 firearms. Similarly, Rosenfeld (1996) found no significant reductions in firearm homicides or assaults associated with firearm buy-back programs in St. Louis in 1991 and 1994. Based on these and other evaluations of firearm buy-back programs, Wintemute (2000, p. 85) refers to them as “interventions of chiefly symbolic value.” Levitt (2004, p. 174), in a review of the evidence of effectiveness of strategies to reduce firearm violence, concluded that “research evaluations have consistently failed to document any link between gun buy-back programs and reductions in gun violence.”

There are several potential reasons why firearm buy-back programs apparently do not have the intended effect of reducing firearm violence. First, the people who turn in firearms are not the same people who engage in gun violence. For example, in Seattle, the average age of a person turning in a gun was 51 (Callahan, Rivara and Koespell 1994), in comparison with the average offender who uses a firearm in a crime is in his early twenties. Second, buy-back programs typically yield old firearms. For example, the average age of a firearm turned in during Washington, D.C.'s 1999 buy-back program was 15 years (ATF 2000), while the majority of firearms used in crimes are less than five years old (Cook, Moore and Braga 2002). Similarly, the majority of weapons turned in during Washington, D.C.'s buy-back program were revolvers when semiautomatic weapons were the most frequently used firearm in crime there (Wintemute 2000). Levitt (2004) also notes that replacement guns are easily acquired, so the actual reduction in available firearms is less than the number of turned in firearms.

The City of Trenton and partners will hold a gun buy-back event on May 12, 2012. Based on this research, the Juvenile Crime Committee of the Trenton Prevention Policy Board recommends that if the city decides to do another event, it should track the age and gender of those who submit guns, as well analyze the type of guns collected. Gun buy-back programs should also be assessed for its impact on police-community relations, since an evaluation of the 1991 and 1994 St. Louis buy-back programs found that the programs "were considered to be a potentially effective vehicle for community mobilization (Wintemute 2000, p. 86).

### **Operation Ceasefire**

In 1995, in response to high levels of youth violence, particularly firearm homicides, the Boston Police Department, other criminal justice agencies, and researchers from Harvard University collaborated on an approach to reduce youth violence in the City of Boston dubbed "Operation Ceasefire." They began by analyzing the available data about youth violence. That analysis indicated that youth violence was concentrated among a comparatively small number of gang members, on which they focused a variety of enforcement and community activities. One component of the strategy involved working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) to identify the sources of the firearms used in gun crimes and to target those sources for prosecution. Another involved meeting with gang members where they were told, in no uncertain terms, that law enforcement was focusing on violence and that any act of violence by any member of their gang would result in intense pressure on every member of the gang from law enforcement. Gang members were also offered assistance with finding jobs, getting into drug treatment, getting back into school, and related social services (Kennedy, Braga and Piehl 2001).

Did Operation Ceasefire work? In 1990 there were 73 youth homicides in the City of Boston. In 1999 and 2000 there was one youth homicide. Although far from conclusive, an evaluation of the program by the Harvard researchers who helped design and implement it found significant impact in reducing youth violence (Braga, Kennedy, Piehl and Waring, 2001). As a consequence, Operation Ceasefire has since been replicated in a large number of American cities, including fourteen cities in New Jersey.

Trenton/Ewing began its own Operation Ceasefire in 2008, in collaboration with Isles. This program focused on working with the community to prevent and de-escalate gun violence. Although not yet assessed for its effects and despite positive anecdotal experiences from community members and organizations, funding from the state for Operation Ceasefire from the state was reduced and then eliminated in fiscal year 2010.

The TPPB Working Group on Juvenile Justice proposes to reinstitute part of the Operation Ceasefire strategy, namely to reactivate members of the community to reduce gun violence. The main goal of this initiative is to recruit and train outreach workers who will be able to engage high risk victims and their families in meaningful dialogue about ending the cycle of violence. After receiving forty hours of training the workers will be able to link the victims and families to social services, distribute materials that encourage residents not to retaliate, organize activities that aim to help defuse tension, and engage in any other related tasks.

#### **Sibling Pilot Project**

In a recent Youth Stat meeting, staff met with a family which has had extensive involvement in the juvenile justice system, including one brother currently on parole and another on probation. The family had a history of non-compliance with court orders, service plans and alcoholism. A simple question was asked: “Are there other children in the home?” The response was “a little girl.” The staff member inquired, “who is she and how is she doing?” This preliminary inquiry revealed that she is currently repeating the fifth grade; her school records indicate a history of high absenteeism and poor response from the parent to address concerns.

The TPPB Juvenile Crime Working Group agrees that this scenario is common: after one member of a family becomes known to police, court, or social service systems, no one is surprised when younger brothers or sisters start to engage in antisocial behavior. Local service providers express concern that interventions with at-risk siblings often are delayed until that child is already in trouble. Lois Krause, the Coordinator of the Youth Stat Program and with over twenty years of experience with the Trenton Police Department, lamented “my experience has been that not only do siblings of juvenile become involved in anti-social behavior, but that they are also likely to start an earlier age than their older sibling.”



A growing body of academic research suggests that sibling effects on antisocial behavior are particularly strong during adolescence. Specifically, studies have found that sibling delinquency and relationship conflict both predict antisocial outcomes, including violence and court involvement (Criss et al. 2005; Farrington 1989; Lauritsen 1993; Slomkowsly 2001). To date, most research has focused on pairs of brothers, but there is evidence that this effect is also important for sisters. Most notable is the finding that sibling effects on delinquency are independent of the impact of other salient factors, such as parental and peer influences and childhood levels of aggression. Preliminary evidence suggests that the strength of the sibling effect depends on the sex composition of the pair (effects may be stronger for same-sex versus mixed-sex sibling pairs, Buist 2010), age composition of the pair (older siblings may have more of an influence on younger siblings), and the family history of criminal behavior (effect may be stronger among siblings whose parents have been arrested, Fagan and Najman 2003). To explain these findings, researchers highlight the social interaction between siblings as a risk factor for the development of delinquent activity in adolescence. As such, prevention and intervention efforts that target siblings of delinquent youth have the potential to improve outcomes for both siblings.

The Sibling Pilot Project seeks to institute just such an intervention effort, through a partnership between Youth Stat and the Chief of Probation, Frank Digaimo. During the intake process, parents of juveniles who are already placed on probation will be given the opportunity to refer younger (non-adjudicated) siblings to Youth Stat. Services are voluntary and families must willingly cooperate. Youth Stat intends to serve 15 to 20 siblings in the first 12 months of the program, with an emphasis on same-sex pairs. Youth Stat understands that this may require increasing its capacity to conduct home or field visits, possibly through an explicit partnership with a mentoring program. In doing so, this program seeks to implement an intervention plan prior to court-ordered involvement for troubled families.

### Trenton-Mentoring Coalition/Institute

Mentoring is one of the most commonly-used interventions to prevent, divert, and remediate youth engaged in or thought to be at risk for delinquent behavior, school failure aggression, or other antisocial behavior. Mentoring can lead to reductions in antisocial outcomes, with the largest effects for delinquency and aggression. Recent research supports these findings among youth at-risk for delinquent behavior, as well as those already involved with the justice system (Bouffard et al. 2008; DuBois et al. 2011). The positive effects of mentoring may be stronger when mentors are able to pair mentoring programs with their own professional duties, goals, and development (Tolan et al. 2008) and strong relationships are formed between mentors and youth (DuBois et al. 2002). In addition, developing clear definitions of mentoring activities and relationships (Blechman and Bopp 2005) and integrating mentors into coordinated service teams if youth receive services through school, health and human service, law enforcement, or family court.

Given the importance of mentoring, it is no surprise that there are a variety of programs that offer mentoring of varying intensities and length to at-risk youth in Trenton. To date, these organizations do not have a formal means of sharing experiences and expertise, much less locating the individuals who would be best served by their mentoring programs. In contrast, the Newark Mentoring Coalition, created in 2008, has been very successful in creating a resource that identifies at-risk youth and connects and mobilizes volunteer mentors from a variety of programs. The TPPB Working Group on Criminal Justice supports the recommendation to create a Trenton Mentoring Coalition that would build from the model in Newark locally, and to eventually organize a statewide coalition that would support the collaboration of existing mentoring programs without creating new redundancies.

Toby Sanders, President of Trenton’s School Board, suggests that part of the coalition’s job would be to work with the school district and/or the Attorney General’s office to develop a list of at-risk kids who would most benefit from mentorship programs, such as the so-called 14 percent of middle schoolers that have been identified as at risk. To make a coordinated effort among schools, juvenile justice, and self-selected individuals (caregiver or student requested) to identify and provide mentorship to at-risk students, the coalition should also compile and maintain a list of mentor (or mentors) currently engaged with youths, to better provide coverage and avoid duplication, as well as to facilitate communication among mentors.

Additional functions of the coalition may include: creating a master-list of at-risk youth and mentoring programs (including what programs are in the city and who has capacity to absorb more kids); organizing and coordinating the programs, including keeping track of who are the mentors are (e.g., a simple spreadsheet which contains basic contact info for mentors, guidance counselors); identifying and recruiting appropriate mentors; and compiling best practices research and training in order to begin to develop effective mentoring strategies.

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*Thank You*