

Don't be Penny-Wise and Dollar-Foolish

Why we must invest in prevention for children and families

Why is it so important to continue funding prevention programs when public resources are scarce? **Because prevention saves taxpayer dollars.** Prevention saves money by addressing a problem before it spirals out of control and costs the state significant funds to fix.

Let's face it: in today's world, our children and youth are vulnerable to substance abuse, school failure, family breakdown and crime. **Crime costs our state millions** of dollars each year in property losses, lost productivity, medical expenses and public program costs. Incarcerating only one repeat adult offender costs Oregon \$57,000 a year.ⁱ **Services that promote child wellbeing are a bargain.**

Experience and research have identified effective ways of reducing child abuse, keeping kids in school, reducing crime and changing lives for the better. By implementing these strategies, **Oregon communities are getting results:**

- Child abuse and neglect victims **decreased** 19.2% (2000-2001).ⁱⁱ
- Juvenile arrests **dropped** 28.1% from 1996-2001.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Repeat juvenile offenders **decreased** from 37.3% in 1996 to 34.8% in 2000.^{iv}
- School dropout **fell** by 33.8% (1995-2002).^v
- Children entering school ready to learn **improved** by 31% (1997-2002).^{vi}

We know what works

We can predict the savings from family services and supports such as quality early education, health and mental health programs, and juvenile crime prevention.

- Among Healthy Start families receiving long-term services, there **were 60% fewer reported cases of child maltreatment** for 0-2 year olds than in non-served families. Children who suffer abuse or neglect face increased risk of mental disorders, criminal behavior, substance abuse and academic failure.^{vii}
- **For every \$1 spent** on a community-based drug abuse prevention program, **communities can avoid spending \$4 to \$5** over a six-year period in costs for drug abuse treatment and counseling.^{viii}
- At least **79% of the Oregon adult prison population were dropouts** at time of incarceration.^{ix} School dropouts are **four times more likely** to be covered by the Oregon Health Plan, **more than twice as likely** to be unemployed, and if employed, earn an average of **30% less** in wages.^x
- Early childhood services help families help themselves, **increasing tax revenues, decreasing welfare costs, decreasing health costs, and lowering crime.**^{xi}
- Oregon youth had an average of **43% fewer risk indicators** after receiving Juvenile Crime Prevention services. Research shows that we can **prevent** juvenile crime by reducing youth risk factors.^{xii}

Prevention doesn't mean treatment programs for teenagers to overcome their addiction to meth; it means keeping them from experimenting with the drug in the first place. Prevention means encouraging youth to stay in school so they can support themselves and their future family with a good education and a decent job. Prevention means teaching new parents how to provide their children with the kind of care that will ensure healthy development.

Make every dollar count

Oregon is going through tough economic times. Spending dollars whose full benefit may not be clear for two, ten or even twenty years is a difficult decision. But, it is **precisely during times like these** that it is so important to **invest in programs that have been proven to work.** By providing a range of services that meet individual needs at all ages, through programs that research has shown to be effective, we can **get the most out of every tax dollar** invested. When we put our resources into services and supports that prepare children for school, help young people stay in school, and help low-income working families help themselves, we **strengthen all families, all neighborhoods, our communities, and our state's economy.**

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- i Oregon Department of Corrections, 2003.
 - ii "The Status of Children in Oregon's Child Protection System," Department of Human Services, 2001.
 - iii Law Enforcement Data Systems, 2001.
 - iv Oregon's 2002 Statewide Report on Juvenile Recidivism.
 - v Oregon Department of Education, 2002
 - vi Oregon Department of Education, 2002.
 - vii Healthy Start of Oregon 2001-2002 Status Report, NPC Research, Inc.
 - viii Pentz, M.A. "Cost Effectiveness and Cost Benefit Research of Drug Abuse Prevention: Implications for Programming and Policy." NIDA Research Monograph 176.
 - ix Oregon Department of Corrections.
 - x Oregon Health Plan and Oregon Employment Department.
 - xi Karoly, Greenwood, Everingham, Hoube, Kilburn, Rydell, Sanders, Chiesa. "Investing in Our Children: What we Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions." Rand Corporation, 1998.
 - xii Dr. Jeff Sprague, University of Oregon, Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior. Dr. Juliette Mackin, NPC Research, Inc., Presentation to the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Ways & Means Committee, Oregon State Legislature, April 10, 2003.

For more information, please contact the agencies listed below:

Oregon Commission on Children & Families
Oregon Youth Authority
Criminal Justice Commission
Department of Human Services
Oregon Department of Education
Department of State Police, Law Enforcement Data Systems
Department of Corrections