

High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Matter of Public Safety

As law enforcement leaders, our number one priority is protecting our communities. Arkansas' jails are full of people serving time for serious and costly crimes. But it doesn't have to be that way. Providing at-risk kids with high-quality early care and education programs can help them start off on the right path in life, thrive in school, and avoid future crime.

A Path to Less Crime

The path we set children upon, in their earliest years, can make a huge difference. Research shows that high-quality early education and care from birth through pre-kindergarten will result in more successful outcomes.

Fewer behavior problems

Pennsylvania's pre-K program cut the proportion of children at risk for problematic behavior from 22 percent to four percent.² A study of over 1,300 children found that those in higher-quality child care had significantly lower levels of behavior problems at age 15 compared to children in lower-quality care.³

Better school outcomes

- The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) pre-K program improved children's literacy and math scores, with benefits sustained through second grade for literacy,

language and math scores, and through third grade for literacy.⁴

- North Carolina's Smart Start (child care) and More at Four (preschool) initiatives found that the children in counties that spent more per student were two months ahead in reading and 1.5 months ahead in math by fifth grade when compared with children in counties that spent less.⁵
- Children who attended the Arkansas ABC program were less likely to be held back in school by the end of 3rd grade than those who didn't attend any pre-K.⁶ Participants in Michigan's state pre-K were held back in school 51 percent less often than non-participants.⁷

Fewer dropouts

The Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC) program reported a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rates among its participants.⁸ Meanwhile, New Jersey's pre-K

“Arkansas spends over \$429 million a year on corrections to incarcerate criminals.”¹

program found its children were held back 40 percent less often.⁹ Reducing dropout is important, as six out of 10 prisoners nationwide do not have a high school diploma.¹⁰

Less crime and fewer prisoners

Children not served by the CPC program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.¹¹ By age 24, the people served by the Chicago CPC were 20 percent less likely to have served time in a jail or prison.¹²

Conclusion

A better and less expensive way to stop crime going forward is to prevent as many young children as possible from growing up to become involved in crime. High-quality child care and pre-K programs are critical to ensuring our kids get the best start possible. Arkansas policymakers must continue to invest in early care and education programs as a matter of public safety.

1 <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/econ/state/historical-tables.html>

2 <http://www.heinz.org/userfiles/library/specs%20for%20pkc%202009%20final%20research%20report%20113009.pdf>

3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2938040/>

4 <http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Arkansas20Longitudinal20Report20May2013n.pdf>

5 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12645>

6 <http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Arkansas20Longitudinal20Report20May2013n.pdf>

7 <http://bridgemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GSRP-evaluation-may-21-12.pdf>

8 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11343481>

9 <http://nieer.org/research-report/201311apples205th20grade-pdf>

10 <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2011/demo/ewert-wildhagen-prisoner-education-4-6-11.pdf>

11 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11343481>

12 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3793348/>

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be citizen-ready.

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