# America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

A Report From

## FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

by


Sanford Newman, J.D.
President, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.
Professor Emeritus, Harvard Medical School

Edward Zigler, Ph.D.
Sterling Professor of Psychology, Yale University

Lawrence W. Sherman, Ph.D.
Greenfield Professor of Human Relations, University of Pennsylvania

William Bratton
Former Police Commissioner, New York City

Jerry Sanders
Former Chief of Police, San Diego

William Christeson, M.H.S.
Research Director, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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Sanford A. Newman
President
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

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## Key Findings:

1. **Federal, state and local governments could greatly reduce crime and violence by assuring families access to good educational child care programs for babies, toddlers, and pre-school children.**

   - Denying at-risk children quality child development programs may multiply by five times our risk that they will be chronic lawbreakers as adults.
   - Boosting government investment in the quality of child care and development programs for at-risk young children can cut almost in half the number of children experiencing more serious behavior problems when the children start school. This lets schools focus on teaching, and reduces the risk that these children will grow up to be delinquent or violent as teens or adults.
   - At-risk young children who attend high-quality child care programs wind up with no more behavior problems at age eight than children of college-educated parents.

2. **Low- and moderate-income working parents cannot pay what good child care programs cost any more than they could pay the full cost of sending their kids to public school.**

   - Adequate care for two children in a child care center easily costs over $12,000 a year — about $2,000 more than a full-time minimum wage worker earns.
   - In every state the cost for an infant to attend a good urban child care center is higher than the cost of tuition at a public university.

3. **Governments are dropping the ball.**

   - Head Start, the principal federal child development program for children in poverty, is so under-funded that it can serve only half the eligible children, and can serve most of these for only part of the time parents are working.
   - The Child Care and Development Block Grant, designed to help low-income parents pay for child care, can serve only one out of ten eligible children, and provides funds too meager to purchase adequate care.
   - Some state initiatives, like Kentucky's Family Resource Centers, Georgia's universal access to pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year olds, North Carolina's Smart Start, and Ohio's Families and Children First initiative, are making critical contributions. But no state is yet close to meeting the full need for quality child care programs.

4. **Investing now in quality child care and development programs will yield such crime reductions and other benefits that it will leave the government with more money for Social Security, tax cuts, or any other purpose in the years ahead.**

# America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

## A Report from FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

JANUARY 2000

## Introduction

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a national anti-crime organization led by hundreds of those on the front lines of the battle against crime and violence: police chiefs, sheriffs, police organization leaders, prosecutors, crime victims and those from whom murder has taken loved ones.

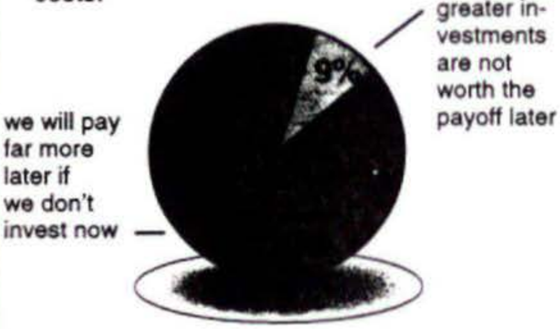
Our members are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But we also know that no punishment after someone gets hurt can undo the agony crime leaves in its wake. When children don't get the right start in life, all of us are endangered. Good educational child care is one of our most powerful weapons against crime, while poor quality child care multiplies the risk that children will grow up to be a threat to every American family. Yet millions of eligible children are missing out on the help they need to get that right start in life.

In a recent survey of police chiefs conducted by George Mason University professors Stephen Mastrofski and Scott Keeter, nearly nine of ten police chiefs said America could greatly reduce crime by expanding educational child care programs and after-school programs. Nine out of ten said that if America doesn't boost investments in child care programs now, it will pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs.[1]

When police chiefs were asked to rate various strategies "on their value as a crime prevention tool," educational child care was given the highest rating for effectiveness by three to ten times more chiefs than such alternatives as trying more juveniles as adults, building more juvenile detention facilities, or installing more metal detectors in schools.[2]

**Police Chiefs Say Child Care Will Reduce Crime, Save Money**

9 out of 10 agreed: "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare, and other costs."




George Mason University Survey

## Just the Facts Please

This report isn't about ideology or philosophy; it's about facts. Like other Americans, crime fighters hold a range of views on whether it would be desirable for more parents to leave the workforce to stay home with their children. The *fact* is most parents are working, and their children are in some form of child care.[3] Their tender minds and emotions are being powerfully shaped by the quality of that care.[4]

**'Failing to provide those youngsters with quality child care multiplied by five times the risk that they would become chronic lawbreakers'**

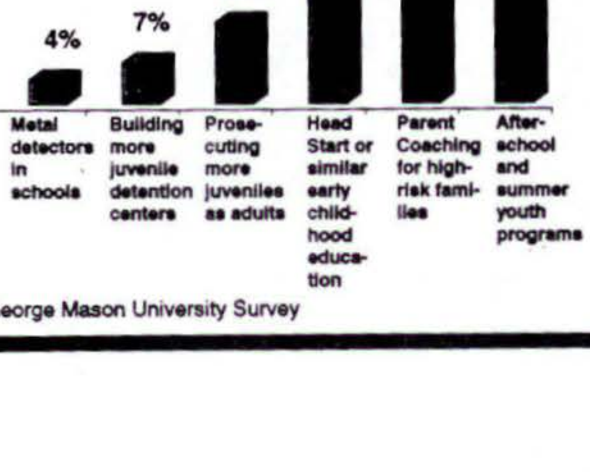
The issue for law enforcement is whether the care the children receive while their parents are working will be good enough to help the kids get a good start in life, or whether it will be care that damages their development and ultimately endangers the public safety. Wishful thinking won't save lives. Good educational child care will.

The time for philosophical debate about whether such investments "might work" is past. The proof is in, and the facts are clear.

## The Good News: Educational Child Care Prevents Crime and Violence

**Police Chiefs Give High Priority to Child Care and After-School Programs**

The chiefs were asked to rate these strategies on a 1 to 5 scale as crime prevention tools. For each strategy, the chart shows the percentage of chiefs who gave it the highest rating.




George Mason University Survey

Educational child care yields extraordinary returns, saving lives and even saving tax dollars.[5] Nurturing, stimulating child care teaches youngsters to get along with others, to care about others, and to start school ready to succeed, and helps them become the contributing citizens and good neighbors we all want them to be.

Powerful evidence from one study after another proves that quality educational child care in the first years of life can greatly reduce the risk that today's babies and toddlers will become tomorrow's violent teens and adults.[6]

For example, in one study, half of a group of at-risk 3- and 4- year-olds were randomly assigned to be in the High/Scope Perry preschool program until they started kindergarten. Twenty-two years later, those who had been left out were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers, with five or more arrests.

In other words, failing to provide those youngsters with quality child care multiplied by five times the risk — every American's risk — that they would become chronic lawbreakers.[7]

Not only are we missing the opportunity to prevent crime, our child care policies may be creating conditions that will lead to greater crime in the future. Crucial new research shows that inadequate child care —the only kind millions of families can afford— can actually multiply the danger that at-risk children will grow up with problem behaviors that can lead to later crime and violence against you and your family.[8]

## The Bad News: Millions of Working Families Can't Afford Adequate Child Care.

Today, millions of children are getting child care so inadequate it should be called child storage.

**'Inadequate child care can actually multiply the danger that at-risk children will grow up with problem behaviors that can lead to later crime and violence'**

Even though many child care teachers are working for poverty wages, often with little training and high turnover, full day child care for two children can easily cost $12,000 per year.[9] That's way out of reach for parents making $10,500 a year at full-time minimum wage jobs, and for millions of other struggling families.

These families —mostly young and still near the lowest earning levels of their working lives— can no more afford to pay for adequate child care during these years than they could pay the full cost of the education we provide in our public schools.

## Protecting the Public Safety Requires Child Care Help for Families.

Just as government couldn't meet its responsibility to protect the public safety without providing public schooling, it can't protect the public safety without assuring that adequate educational child care is accessible to every family.

• The Head Start child development program remains so under-funded it can serve less than half of the three- and four-year-olds eligible for that program, and usually for just half of their parents' work day, for only part of the year. [10]

• Programs like Early Head Start, designed for kids under three, have funds to serve only a tiny fraction of the babies and toddlers who need them.[11]

• The Child Care and Development Fund, which assists communities in helping working families afford adequate child care, can serve only one in ten of those families that are eligible,[12] and provides them with stipends so meager that adequate care usually remains out of reach.[13] In addition, this money can be spent on unlicensed care, so there is even less assurance that this funding is being used for the type of quality child care that is needed for developing children.[14]

## The Public Gets It.

'The Child Care and Development Fund can serve only one in ten of those families that are eligible, and provides them with stipends so meager that adequate care usually remains out of reach'

Americans now realize that, if we want our families to be safe, we all have a stake in making sure that every working family has access to adequate educational child care programs. Polls conducted in July and August for FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS by the Opinion Research Corporation showed:

• By a margin of nine to one, Americans said crime could be greatly reduced by boosting investment in child care, after-school programs, and other similar programs.

• By a margin of three to one they would be prepared either to pay more in taxes or pass up a tax cut to provide kids with access to such programs.

When the American public was asked to pick among national priorities including paying off the debt, new highways, and the military, providing access to child care and after-school programs was picked as one of the two top priorities, in a virtual tie with shoring up Social Security and Medicare.

## The People on the Front Lines Get It.

For those of us in Fight Crime: Invest in Kids who are on the front lines in the battle against crime and violence, the once-quiet crisis in child care is now noisy, pervasive, insistent and tragic. It screams through our police sirens rushing to yet another crime that didn't have to happen. We hear it in the sobs of the thousands of victims of violence and their families.

## It's time for Elected Officials to Get It.

America has a tremendous opportunity. It can greatly reduce crime and violence by making sure that when parents are at work, children have access to quality educational child care. If we continue to pass up that opportunity, we will pay a tragic price. Make no mistake about it: our nation's child care crisis is a crime prevention crisis.

Sanford A. Newman
President
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

# 1: Quality Educational Child Care Prevents Crime

Rigorous behavioral studies, hard experience and brain research tell the same story: in the first several years of life, children's intellects and emotions are being powerfully shaped.

The kind of stimulation and interaction the child receives— touching, holding, rocking, talking, showing — determines the permanent development of the brain. While learning continues throughout life, this brain development proceeds at an astounding pace in the first several years.[15]

Recent brain research is confirmed by years of behavioral research comparing children who had good nutrition, stimulation, and nurturing when they were babies with others not so lucky. These nurturing factors have a substantial impact on brain function at age twelve, and an even greater impact by age fifteen.[16]

The child care programs which have proven most effective in preventing future delinquency and crime are those that supplement quality developmental day care with home visits to coach parents in child-rearing skills.[17] For example:

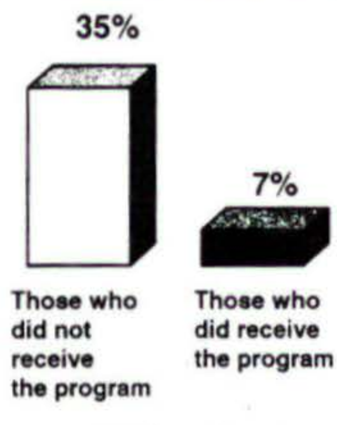
**High/Scope Preschool Program.** In Ypsilanti, Michigan, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation randomly divided low-income three- and four year-olds into two groups. Half received no special services, while the others were enrolled in a quality preschool program, including a weekly home visit, until they started kindergarten. When the children reached age 27, arrest records showed that those who had received quality preschooling were only one-fifth as likely to be "chronic offenders," with more than four arrests.[18]

In other words, those who were denied the quality preschool and parenting education visitor program as preschoolers were five times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers in adulthood!

**Educational Child Care Reduces Future Crime**

At-Risk 3 & 4 year olds who didn't receive the preschool and weekly home visits were five times more likely to become chronic offenders (more than 4 arrests) by age 27.

**Chronic Lawbreakers at Age 27**




High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

**Syracuse University Family Development Program.** Researchers found that subsequent delinquency was cut dramatically when families were provided educational child care, parenting-education home visits, and other services beginning prenatally and continuing until the children began elementary school. Ten years later:

**Kids Denied Quality Child Care Compiled Serious Criminal Records:**
Crimes Committed* Ten Years After the Program Ended, (Ages 13-16).

| Those who did receive the program | Those who did not receive the program |
|---|---|
| **Juvenile Delinquency** | **Juvenile Del.** |
| | **Juvenile Del.** |
| | **Juvenile Del.** |
| | **Juvenile Del.** |
| | **Criminal Mischief** |
| | **Violation of Probat.** |
| | **Petit Larceny** |
| | **Petit Larceny** |
| | **Burglary** |
| | **Attempted Assault** |
| | **Robbery** |
| | **Robbery** |
| | **Assault** |
| | **Sexual Assault** |

* Excludes non-crime "Ungovernable" cases where the juvenile court has ruled the child is out of the control of adults.

Syracuse University Family Development Program

• Among those children who had not received the early childhood services, nearly one in five had already been charged with offenses. Nearly 1 in 10 were already "chronic offenders," with more than four arrests or charges of being ungovernable. And, as the inset shows, many of these offenses were serious.

• Among those children who *had* received the extra services, only one in twenty had even been charged with being ungovernable, and only 1.5% had actually been delinquent.[19]

In other words, failing to provide these babies and toddlers with good educational child care and related services multiplied by ten times the risk that they would become delinquent as teens.

Of course, the benefits of these programs are not limited to crime prevention. When the High/Scope toddlers became adults, for example, they were far better able to support themselves and their families than those left out of the program. Among males, the children who received preschool and home visitor services were eight times more likely to earn over $24,000 a year.[20]

While earnings were lower for females, nearly three times as many of the pre-schooled females as of those left out of the program (48% vs. 18%) were earning more than $12,000 a year. Those who received preschool and home visits as toddlers were also 25% less likely ever to have received welfare or other means-tested social services as adults.[21]

Females who had participated in the preschool program were two and a half times more likely to earn a high school diploma (84% vs. 35%), five times more likely to be married at age 27 (40% vs. 8%)and had one-third fewer out-of-wedlock births than the control group.[22]

**High/Scope Perry Preschool**

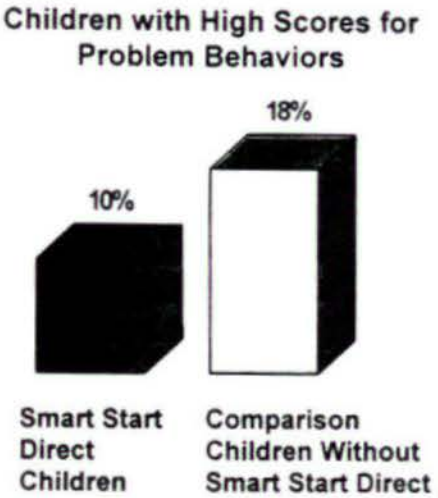
| Outcomes at age 27 | | Perry | Controls |
|---|---|---|---|
| All | Chronic Offending | 7% | 35% |
| Females | Earn > $12,000/year | 48% | 18% |
| Females | High School Diploma | 84% | 35% |
| Females | Married at age 27 | 40% | 8% |
| Males | Earn > $24,000/year | 42% | 6% |
| Females | Receiving Gov. $ | 26% | 59% |

But the bottom line for law enforcement is that providing these proven "right-start" services dramatically reduces the risk that children will grow up to become criminals. Failing to provide kids with these services sharply increases crime and costs lives.

Because it is difficult and expensive to follow toddlers for ten years after their participation in an early childhood program ends (as in the Syracuse study), and even harder to follow them for the 24 years of the High/Scope Perry study, few other studies have been able to directly measure the impact of early childhood investments on delinquency and arrests. But other studies do show that quality early education programs, especially when combined with a family support/parenting education component, have a positive impact on children's ability to get along with others and work to reduce other anti-social behavior.[23]

These results are not limited to small, model programs. For example, North Carolina's pioneering Smart Start program is spending $78 million a year on enhancing access to quality child care and other services for children under six. A new study by the University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Center shows that children in the child care centers receiving substantial quality-improvement help from Smart Start were only about half as likely to have serious behavior problems in kindergarten.[24]

**Problem Behaviors Cut in Half By North Carolina's Smart Start:**
Comparison children were almost twice as likely to score poorly on behavior problems in Kindergarten as kids who attended Smart Start centers that received all the quality supports (Smart Start Direct).




Frank Porter Graham Center

The flip side of that statement is equally telling: Kids in centers not receiving the Smart Start services were nearly twice as likely to be disruptive in kindergarten.[25] This is important because research consistently shows that children who exhibit problem behaviors in the early grades are at far greater risk than other children of becoming teen delinquents and adult criminals.[26]

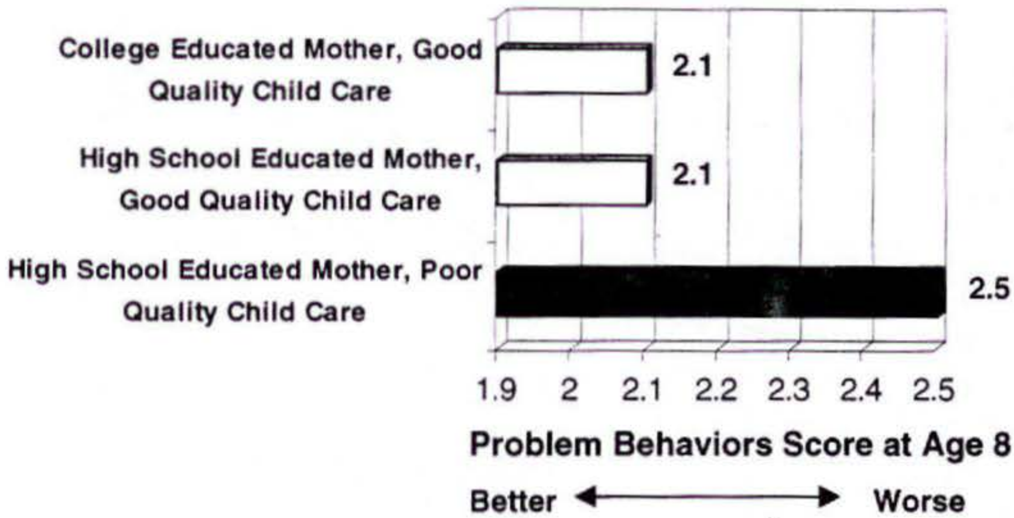
A nationwide study of child care confirms the point that quality matters when it comes to problem behaviors later in life. *The Children of the Cost Quality Study Go to School* research was conducted in four different states by a team from four different universities. The study first rated child care centers for quality. Years later, when the children who had been in the various centers were eight years old, their behavior was evaluated.

Children of high school-educated mothers who received *good* quality child care had no more behavior problems than the children of college-educated mothers. But, children of high school-educated mothers from *poor* quality child care had significantly more behavior problems.[27]

Taken as a whole, these research breakthroughs make clear that "early care and nurture have a decisive, long-lasting impact on how people develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to regulate their own emotions."[28] It is to our distinct advantage to put the teachings of this science to work.

**'Children who exhibit problem behaviors in the early grades are at far greater risk than other children of becoming teen delinquents and adult criminals'**

**Quality Child Care Prevents School Behavior Problems:**
At age 8, at-risk children who had been in *good* child care centers in the years before they started school had no more behavior problems than children of the best-educated mothers. But those at-risk kids who had been in *poor* quality child care centers had significantly higher behavior problems.




The Children of the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Go to School

## 2: Child Storage Isn't Child Care

High quality, educational child care programs cut crime. Mediocre child care doesn't, and research strongly indicates that poor quality care actually increases crime.

Of course, when their parents are working, nearly all preschool children will receive some kind of care, of whatever quality. Marriott Corporation executive Donna Klein reports that every day she finds children of service workers in hotel lobbies and dangerous cleaning supply rooms, because their low-wage working parents are unable to find decent child care at an affordable price.[29] Other parents may take their children to family day care homes in which a provider trying to make a living while keeping fees down is caring for too many babies and toddlers, or knows too little about child development to provide the nurturing and stimulation they need. As children reach school age, and sometimes even before, desperate parents may reluctantly leave them to "take care of themselves."

Recent research makes clear that "quality child care" must do far more than keep children safe from immediate physical injury. Good child care stimulates and nurtures children to maximize their healthy intellectual and emotional development.[30]

We can no more afford to accept child care that is merely "custodial" than we could accept assigning some children to public schools that are "custodial" rather than "instructional".[31]

**'We can no more afford to accept child care that is merely "custodial" than we could accept assigning some children to public schools that are "custodial" rather than instructional'**

As the Committee for Economic Development, a group of business executives from major corporations, said, "All programs for children from birth to age five — whether designated as child care, early childhood education or preschool — should focus on their educational and developmental needs and take into account what children will need to succeed in school and in life."[32]

The programs which have been proven to have the most substantial impact in reducing antisocial behavior, delinquency, and adult crime were quality programs. Staff-child ratios in such quality educational child care programs were one adult for every three or four infants and toddlers, or one adult for every six preschoolers; staff were well-trained and supervised;[33] and the programs included parenting-education components.

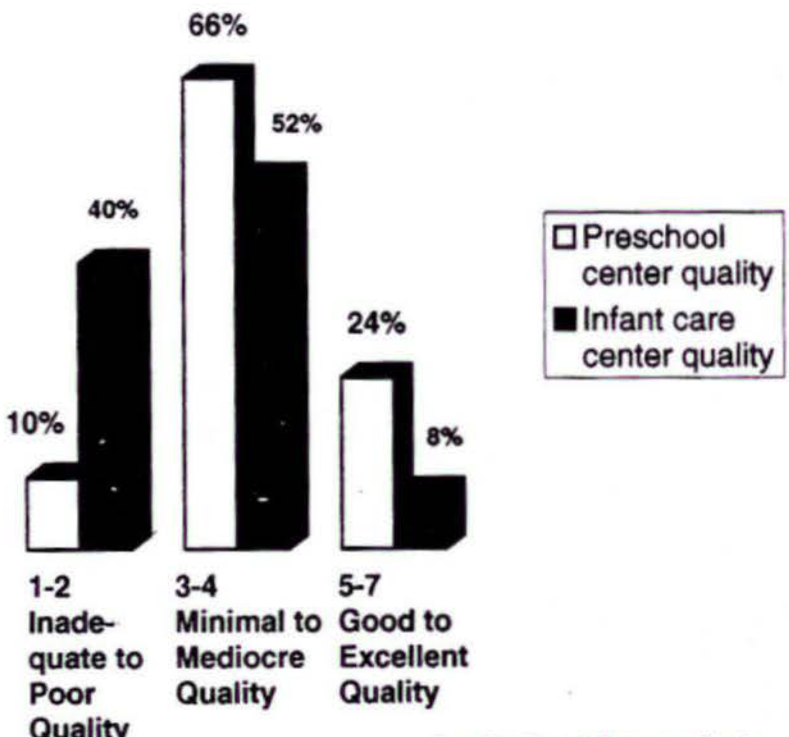
Just as high-quality care can markedly reduce the risk of delinquency and other unhappy outcomes, low-quality care leads to increased risk of such results.[34]

Unfortunately, much of the child care America's children are receiving is substandard. *The Cost, Quality, and Outcome Study* rated 400 randomly selected child care centers on a scale of 1 to 7 for the following characteristics: 1) Inadequate – children's need for health and safety are not met, there is no observed warmth or support from adults, and no learning is encouraged. 3) Minimal – children's basic health and safety needs are met, a little warmth and support is provided by adults, and a few learning experiences are provided; 5) Good – health and safety needs are fully met, warmth and support is provided for all children, and learning is encouraged in many ways through interesting, fun activities. 7) Excellent – all of the characteristics of good care are present, and children are encouraged to become independent, teachers plan for children's individual learning needs, and adults have close, personal relationships with each child."[35]

The study found that 1 in ten preschool centers and fully 4 in ten infant care centers were of such poor quality (scoring 1-2 on their scale) that they may jeopardize the children's development. In contrast, on average only 14% of all the centers studied achieved developmentally adequate quality (scoring 5-7).[36]

Of *un*regulated family day care, 3% is of good quality, and of regulated family day care, 12% is of good quality.[37]

**A Critical Shortage of Quality Child Care**
Quality ratings of preschool and infant child care centers. (The quality ratings are explained in the text).




Cost Quality and Outcomes Study

# 3: Too Many Families Can't Afford Adequate Child Care

Today, in large part because so many parents cannot afford quality care, millions of children are in child care so inferior in quality that it not only fails to produce positive results but may actually damage their development.[38]

'The average annual cost of child care for a 4-year-old in an urban center is more than the average annual cost of public college tuition in almost every state'

As this decade began, the Committee for Economic Development declared, "The lack of availability of quality child care that is developmentally appropriate, has educational value, and is affordable has created a crisis of national proportions that affects most families but hits low-income families the hardest."[39]

Into the new millennium, that crisis has escalated.

Today, only 23% of all families with children younger than age 6 have one parent working and one at home.[40] One out of four children lives with only one parent,[41] and half of all children can now expect to live an average of at least five years in a single-parent family.[42]

Child care is expensive. In fact, a survey by the Children's Defense Fund and the National Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies found that: "The average annual cost of child care for a 4-year-old in an urban center is more than the average annual cost of public college tuition in almost every state. In some cities child care costs *twice* as much as college tuition."[43]

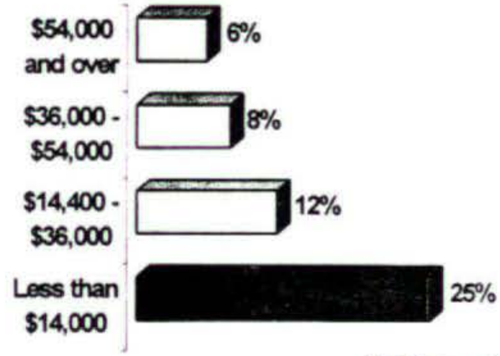
The report concluded, "The average annual cost for a 4-year-old in a child care center exceeds $4,000 in over two-thirds of 47 cities surveyed and is more than $5,000 in one-third of the cities…The cost of care for infants is even higher. The average cost of center care for a 12-month-old is above $5,500 in half the cities surveyed, including 11 urban areas where child care center costs for an infant average more than $7,000 per year."[44]

These are average costs. Experts estimate that quality care for infants and toddlers in many cities can rarely be found for less than $10,000 a year.[45]

Especially at the lower end of the average range, the quality of much of the care provided is woefully inadequate.[46] It is nearly impossible for child care centers to provide necessary staff-to-child ratios and group sizes, and pay enough to retain appropriately trained staff, without

**Low Income Families Pay One Quarter of Their Income for Child Care**

The percentage of family income going for child care (of families who pay for any type of care).




The Census Bureau

charging higher fees.[47]

Census Bureau data show that, of families paying for child care, families with incomes over $54,000 a year are spending 6% of their income on child care. But families with less than $14,000 annual income are spending on average fully 25% of their income on child care. Even with that huge portion of their income going to child care, poor families are able to spend only half as much on child care as families with incomes over $54,000 per year.[48]

**'How can a single parent with two children working full time at $10,500 a year pay for child care that can easily cost $12,000 a year?'**

How can a single parent with two children, working full time at $10,500 a year pay for child care that can easily cost $12,000 a year?[49] Even two parents making $21,000 a year, cannot afford that. Clearly, unless government helps, quality child care is simply not an available option for most of the families whose children are most at risk.

Today, quality child care and after-school programs are financially out of reach for millions of America's most at-risk children and youth. Young families, most of whom are still near the lowest earning levels of their working lives, can no more afford to pay for quality child care than they could afford to pay the full cost of the education we provide through public schools.

High-quality child care and child development programs are least available to those who derive the most benefit from them — poor children.[50]

Research shows that children whose mothers have lower levels of education receive the greatest benefits from high quality child care, and are most sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality care. For example, one study shows that, when they start first grade, middle-class children have been exposed to an average of 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading, but that the average for low-income children is only 25 hours![51]

Among those children from low- and moderate-income families who are enrolled in child care programs, the services their families are able to afford are typically inadequate. As the Carnegie Corporation's Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades concluded: "With the notable exception of Head Start and some exemplary state-funded programs, programs attended by lower-income children do not ordinarily provide the full range of child development, health, and parent services that help children get ready for school.[52]

With 35% of America's children reaching school unprepared to succeed,[53] schools and teachers too often are overwhelmed, jeopardizing the development and education of even those children who are adequately prepared.[54]

From a law enforcement perspective, the child care crisis is especially severe because it strikes hardest at those most vulnerable — at-risk children. When we shortchange their child care, we increase the risk they will grow up to pose a threat to the rest of us.

## 4: F d ral and Stat Governments Fall Short of the Investment Needed to Protect Public Safety

State and local governments long have shouldered the cost of public schools from kindergarten to high school and much of the cost of state university systems. But when it comes to child care, parenting education, and after-school programs, government help for struggling working parents has been disastrously inadequate.

The federal government assists families in obtaining child care primarily through:

**1. The Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**, provides states with funds which can be used to help families making less than 85% of the state's median income pay for child care. Most states, in practice, set an eligibility ceiling lower than 85% of median income. In order to receive the full federal CCDBG allocation, states must match a portion of the funding, and they may add additional funding. The resulting pool of federal and state funds is the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**

Families receiving this assistance are free to choose child care provided by a relative or neighbor, a child care center, or someone who provides child care in the provider's home. The average federal subsidy for the children served is about $66 per week.[55]

States design their own programs to spend these funds as each sees fit, with virtually no federal requirements attached.[56] All states currently have established a sliding scale, under which the parents pay a greater portion of the cost of child care as their income approaches the eligibility ceiling, but the scale itself varies widely from one state to another.

Federal CCDBG and state funding for CCDF are woefully inadequate. A recent study by the Department of Health and Human Services found that nine in ten eligible children with working parents —13.2 million of the 14.7 million eligible—get nothing from the Child Care and Development Fund, and the need is far from being met by other state or federal programs.[57]

**'Nine in ten eligible children with working parents — 13.2 million of 14.7 million eligible — get nothing from the Child Care and Development Fund, and the need is far from being met by other state or federal programs'**

An Urban Institute study of child care for low-income families in six communities (Bath, NY; Birmingham, AL; Boulder, CO; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; and San Francisco, CA) found that a low-income family with no welfare history, despite eligibility for child care subsidies, would find no funds available to them in five of the six communities.[58] Although families moving from welfare to work must be provided with transitional child care assistance, that assistance ends after one year, at which point they may be unable to get assistance from any other source.[59] A recent Center for Law and Social Policy review of available state surveys found that, "In all of the states with data on this topic, less than 50% of the responding families that have left welfare and are now working are receiving child care assistance. In most of the study sites, utilization is 30% or less." The review also found that in the few studies that asked these families about awareness, 40% or more of the families were unaware the subsidies were even available." [60]

**2. Head Start.** The Head Start program, which began in 1965, provides comprehensive education, social and emotional development programs, physical and mental health and nutrition services, and parent involvement for children whose families are below the poverty line. It serves primarily 3- and 4-year-olds. The federal government sets minimum standards, but funds hundreds of community-based grantees — nonprofit organizations and school systems—to provide services.

**'Because of inadequate funding Head Start today can serve only half of the three- and four-year-olds eligible for the program'**

Because of inadequate funding, Head Start today can serve only half of the three- and four-year olds eligible for the program.

The latest figures for 1999 show that approximately two thirds of Head Start families had at least one parent working, and almost half are working full time. About half of those who rely on Head Start indicate they need full time, full year child care.[61] Nevertheless, Head Start programs have been forced by inadequate funding to continue providing less than the nine-hour-a-day programs that full-time working parents typically need. In fact, only about 13% percent of Head Start programs provide full day programs.[62]

**3. Early Head Start** was created to provide comprehensive child development and family support services to low-income babies and toddlers from birth to age three. Its first 68 grants to community-based service providers were awarded late in 1995. In Fiscal Year 1999, Early Head Start served 39,000 children, out of a total of nearly three million eligible youngsters.[63]

**4. Tax Credits. The Dependent Care Tax Credit (DCTC)** allows parents who need child care in order to work to claim an income tax credit for a part of their child care expenses for children younger than thirteen. While well-intentioned, the program that costs the government $2.5 billion a year in forgone revenue has two serious flaws. While this credit is of value, it provides very little help to those families who most need it.

• The amount that went to families with under $40,000 in household income in 1996 averaged $409 a family.[64] In most cities, that's less than the cost of one month's child care for one child.[65]

• The poorest families (those with income so low they owe no income tax, or little tax) get no or little benefit from a tax credit. Consequently, of every $100 in federal tax credits, only $2.40 helps families with incomes under $15,000, and $97.60 goes to families with incomes higher than $15,000.[66] In fact, about $40 of every $100 goes to families making over $50,000.[67]

The other substantial federal tax provision subsidizing child care, the Dependent Care Assistance Plan, allows an employee to set aside up to $5,000 per year in non-taxed income for child care expenses. These credits, totaling $890 million in fiscal year 1998,[68] were even more heavily tilted toward upper-income taxpayers.[69]

### 5. State Funded Preschool Programs and State Funded Head Start.

Some states have made important commitments to early childhood care and development programs. Kentucky's statewide Family Resource Centers, based on the Schools of the 21st Century model, provide all-day educational child care for 3,4, and 5-year olds. North Carolina's pioneering Smart Start program initiated by Governor Jim Hunt; Ohio's Families and Children First Initiative, launched by former Governor George V. Voinovich; and Georgia's universal access pre-kindergarten program for 4-year olds are all making critical contributions to helping children in those states get a solid start.

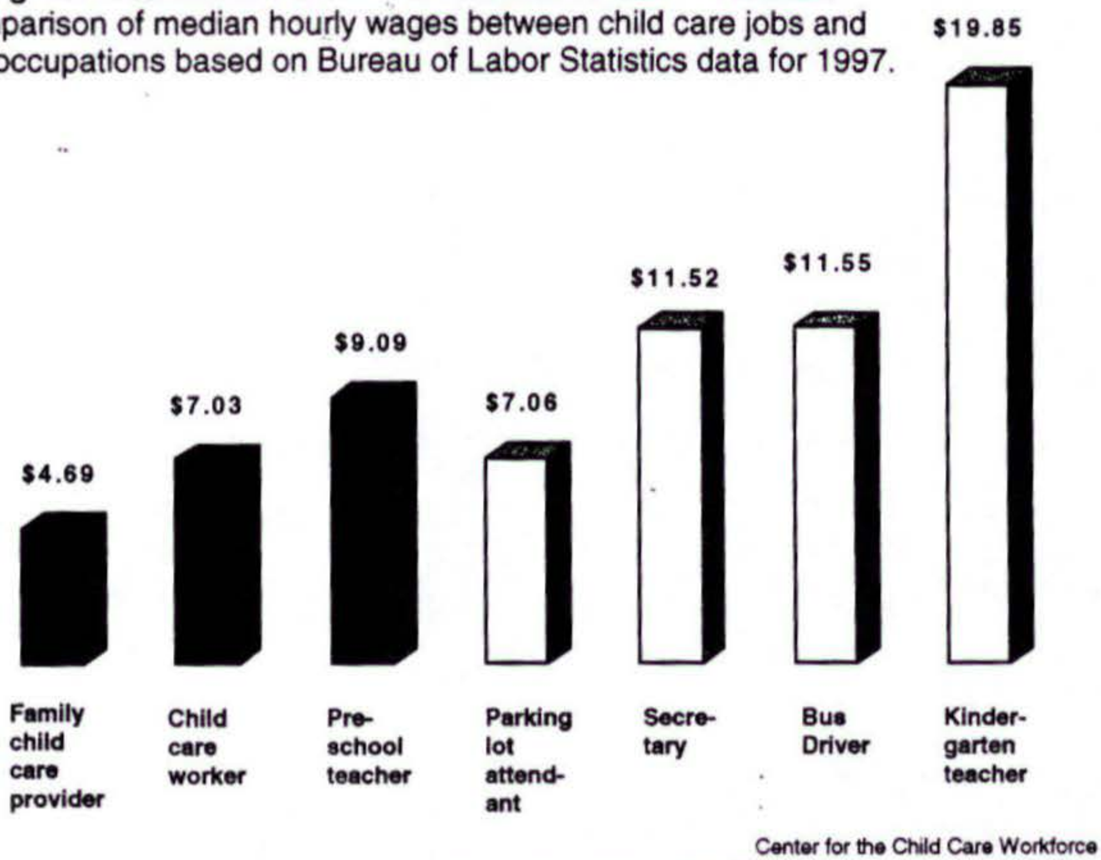
**'What we experience as turnover, children experience as loss'**

Still, the amount spent by states nationwide on Pre-K and state funded Head Start programs is just $1.7 billion and reaches only about 700,000 kids.[70] Since many of the children served by these often more universal programs are not from low-income families, the number of low-income children served is even less. So despite such pathbreaking work by some states, both state and federal investment has fallen lamentably and tragically short of what America's children and the public safety demand.

### A Growing Crisis

Even with modest efforts on the state and federal level to increase funding, America faces a child care crisis. Fueled by the welfare-to-work-movement and an expanding economy, demand for child care is booming just as experienced workers are quitting to take higher-paying jobs in other fields.

Salaries for child care workers in centers fall below those for parking lot attendants. Income for providers working in their homes is even lower.[71] As a consequence, workers are quitting in droves.[72] The Center for the Child Care Workforce reports that turnover among workers was 30% in 1997.[73] Compounding the problem is the fact that many of the workers leaving child care have a high level of education much in demand in the soaring economy. This is not just an economic problem, "What we experience as turnover, children experience as loss."[74]




**Parking Lot Attendants Paid More Than Child Care Providers**

A comparison of median hourly wages between child care jobs and other occupations based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 1997.

# 5: Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish Policy Choices: Wasting Money and Lives

Do investments like these in quality early-childhood education bust budgets — or save money?

**Educational Child Care Saves Taxpayers' Money**

Even after accounting for inflation, over seven dollars was saved by the public for every dollar invested in a preschool and home visitation program.


High/Scope Perry Preschool

Rutgers University economist Steven Barnett has estimated that the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program produced nearly $150,000 per participant in savings from reduced crime alone.[75] Even after discounting these savings to take into account interest which could have been earned on the preschool investment while the High/Scope toddlers were growing up, Barnett concluded that the net savings were more than $70,000 per participant in crime-related savings alone, and a total of $88,000 once welfare, tax and other savings are included.[76]

In short, every dollar invested in the High/Scope Perry program returned $7.16 to the public. These savings count only the benefits to the public at large — in reduced costs of crime, welfare and remedial education and in added revenues from taxes paid when the preschoolers became adult workers—without even taking into account the enormous direct benefits to the kids themselves.[77]

Barnett estimates that the cost to society of failing to provide at least two years of quality early-childhood care and education to low-income children is approximately $100,000 per child, totaling about $400 billion for all poor children now under five.[78]

A recent RAND Corporation study found that even after excluding all benefits to crime victims and other citizens, and discounting to account for alternative investments, savings to government alone from providing the High/Scope services would come to twice the program's costs.[79]

Economists, looking at this, other research and their own analyses have concluded that spending on early childhood programs are the best investments government can make in education. As James Heckman at the University of Chicago puts it, "Skills [including social skills] acquired early on make later learning easier."[80] William Gale and Isabel V. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution, write that investing in early childhood education provides government and society "with estimated rates of return that would make a venture capitalist envious."[81]

**'Investing in early childhood education provides government and society with estimated rates of return that would make a venture capitalist envious'**

A 1997 study by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimates that each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country between \$1.7 million and \$2.3 million.[82]

The Committee for Economic Development summed up the bottom line this way as it called for a greater investment in educational child care programs:

"Education is an investment, not an expense. If we can ensure that all children are born healthy and develop the skills and knowledge they need to be productive, self-supporting adults, whatever is spent on their development and education will be returned many times over in higher productivity, incomes, and taxes, and in lower costs for welfare, health care, crime, and myriad other economic and social problems."[83]

The bottom line: investments in quality child development and after-school programs are money-savers, not budget-busters.

***"The question is not whether we can afford these programs, it is whether we can afford to jeopardize the safety of millions of Americans and saddle future generations with the cost of failing to make these proven investments today. When child care and after-school programs save dollars and cut crime, why shouldn't our federal and state governments provide the funding that will enable communities to get the job done?"***

Elliot L. Richardson:
Former U.S. Attorney General and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare

## 6: From Experts in Child Development and the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call for Action

The people on the front lines fighting crime are less concerned with political ideology than with hard-nosed practical solutions. They insist on doing what really works to fight crime.

Everyone agrees, of course, that dangerous criminals need to be locked up. But the people who work day-in and day-out to track down, arrest, and prosecute criminals know that this vital defense is only a stop-gap measure. So do crime victims.

Today, hundreds of our nation's most distinguished police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and crime victims have joined with experts in child development in calling on all public officials to protect the public safety by providing all infants, toddlers and preschool children access to quality child care at a price their parents can afford.

National and state law enforcement organizations have joined in the call for educational child care for all children. The Major Cities (Police) Chiefs organization, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National District Attorneys Association, The National Sheriffs Association, and law enforcement associations in Illinois, Iowa, Maine, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Arizona and California have called on government to guarantee all kids access to child care as a necessary step to reduce crime.

That means child care with enough well-trained staff to ensure that young children receive the nurturing and stimulating environment they need to start school ready to succeed and to learn the core values that begin to develop in the first years of life. To be most effective in reducing crime, quality child care and development programs for at-risk families should be linked to parent education and family support.

**'We should be assuring that Head Start has enough funding to serve all the low-income children who need it, and provide full-day, high-quality, year-round care for the children of working parents '**

At the federal level, this means we should be assuring that our most at-risk babies and toddlers receive the care they need from birth to age three through Early Head Start and other quality programs. It means we should be assuring that Head Start has enough funding to serve all the low-income children who need it, and provide full-day, high-quality, year-round care for the children of working parents. And it means sufficient increases in funding for educational child care programs so that all families will have the help they need to access quality care.

It means states should sharply increase their own investments in educational child care and development programs to help their children get the right start.

## Conclusion

'A gaping crime prevention deficit'

Our federal and state governments are falling far short of the investments in child care needed to meet their responsibility to protect the public safety. That shortfall is part of a gaping crime-prevention deficit that jeopardizes the safety of every American.

It is time that leaders at the state and federal levels lay out a plan to eliminate that deficit. No responsibility of federal and state governments is more fundamental than protecting the public safety.

That responsibility simply cannot be met without providing communities with the resources to assure that all families, especially those whose children are most at risk of going astray, have access to quality child care at a price they can afford.

***"We need to start fighting crime in the high chair, not the electric chair."***

George Sweat:
former Police Chief of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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# FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS



## WHAT

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a bipartisan, nonprofit anti-crime organization led by America's best-known **police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors** and **victims of violence**.

## WHO

FIGHT CRIME is led by National and State Advisory Committees that include over six hundred police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and victims of violence. One of the founding members was former Attorney General Elliot Richardson. Present leaders include the presidents of the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Union of Police Associations, and the Police Executive Research Forum. The victims of violence include Marc Klaas, whose daughter Polly was abducted and murdered in California, and Jean Lewis, president of the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' Crime and Violence Prevention Resource Council includes leading experts in criminology, child development and law enforcement.

## HOW

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS:

- Develops policy recommendations and analyzes the crime-prevention impact of public policy proposals.
- Conducts local, state and national public education efforts about effective crime prevention programs.
- Builds national, state and local leadership committees of police, prosecutors and crime survivors as well as resource councils of experts in fields such as child and youth development, criminology and law enforcement.
- Builds grassroots networks of individuals committed to educating their own neighbors and public officials.
- Serves as an information clearinghouse for journalists, policy-makers and the public.

## BACKGROUND

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS was launched in July, 1996.

2000 P Street, NW • Suite 240 • Washington, DC 20036 • (202) 776-0027 • Fax (202) 776-0110 • www.fightcrime.org
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