

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

ACTION

- Increase resources for effective juvenile justice and delinquency prevention initiatives.

HISTORY

Funding for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention has been targeted for drastic budget cuts in recent years. Three programs in particular have suffered the brunt of these cuts:

- The Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) was reduced from \$249.5 million in FY 2002, to \$50 million in FY 2006.
- The Delinquency Prevention Block Grant (DPBG) received no funding for FY 2006, the third consecutive year without funding.
- The Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program was cut by more than half, to \$46.5 million in FY 2003, then partly restored to \$80 million in FY 2004, and \$79.3 million in FY 2005. FY 2006 funding was again reduced to \$65 million. In addition, \$60 million of the FY 2006 funds for Title V are earmarked for special purposes and, therefore, are not available for their intended purposes.

These programs provide vital resources for community initiatives to prevent delinquency and work with young people to keep them on the right track. These deep funding reductions make developing new initiatives or maintaining adequate levels of existing programs increasingly difficult for states and localities. Further budget cuts will result in increased delinquency rates due to the elimination of proven effective rehabilitation and prevention services. These cuts will cause irreparable damage to the juvenile

justice system, delaying or eliminating much-needed improvements to juvenile detention facilities.

Juvenile Accountability Block Grant

JABG was created in 1998 and for four subsequent years was funded at or near \$250 million. JABG resources help ensure the smooth administration of the juvenile justice system by developing and administering accountability-based sanctions for juvenile offenders; hiring juvenile judges, prosecutors, probation officers, and court-appointed defenders; and funding pretrial services for juveniles.

JABG program areas have expanded to include implementing graduated sanction programs that consist of counseling, restitution, community service, and supervised probation; establishing or expanding substance abuse programs; and promoting mental health screening and treatment.

Funding for JABG was cut to \$190 million in FY 2003, to \$60 million in FY 2004, to \$54.6 million in FY 2005, and \$50 million for FY 2006. Between 1998 and 2002, JABG was the largest federal funding source for juvenile justice. Communities nationwide received funds and built successful programs. These initiatives are threatened today. Due to decreased funding, numerous programs will be closed, scaled back, or downsized and, therefore, will reach fewer children and youth.

Delinquency Prevention Block Grant

DPBG was created as part of the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (P.L. 107-253) in 2002. The block grant is intended to fund activities that prevent and reduce juvenile crime in communities that have a comprehensive juvenile crime prevention plan.

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In creating this new initiative, the President and Congress made a commitment to expanding treatment, rehabilitation, and prevention. In neglecting to fund DPBG for FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006, these commitments have been rejected.

Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program

Title V is the only federal funding source dedicated solely to delinquency prevention. It funds collaborative, community-based delinquency prevention efforts to reach youth in high-risk situations before they make negative choices. Title V brings together local participants in a comprehensive effort to reduce risk factors in children's environments, while promoting factors that lead to healthy behavior. Prevention efforts that reduce risk factors or enhance protective factors maximize the chances of reducing juvenile delinquency and related problems, while enabling young people to transition successfully to adulthood.

Funded at or near \$95 million from 1998 to 2002, Title V funding was slashed in 2003 by more than half, to \$46 million. With numerous earmarks for special purposes, little more than \$2 million was left to distribute to the states. In practical effect, Title V was eliminated in FY 2003, and dozens of effective community initiatives received no funding. Funding for Title V was partly restored for FY 2004 and FY 2005. Funding for FY 2006 will be \$65 million, but this still leaves a sizable gap in available resources.

- There was, however, a 5% increase in the number of children under 18 arrested in 2004—1,354,699 were arrested compared to 1,289,876 arrested in 2003.
- Successful prevention programs are at risk of losing funding. Students with a high level of participation in afterschool activities are less likely than nonparticipants to engage in problem behaviors, such as being arrested, taking drugs, smoking, and drinking. In New York City, for example, a teen survey completed in conjunction with afterschool programs started by Boys and Girls Clubs in selected public housing developments saw a 22% reduction in drug activity, a 13% drop in juvenile arrests, and a 12.5% reduction in vandalism.

Sources for statistical information are provided in the online version of this fact sheet. See www.cwla.org/advocacy/2006legagenda.htm.

C W L A C O N T A C T

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K E Y F A C T S

- Many young people are not supervised during after-school hours, 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A recent study showed nearly 36% of children report spending time home alone after school at least once a week.
- Recent progress in lowering youth crime rates is threatened by budget cuts. For all Violent Crime Index Offenses combined, the number of juvenile arrests in 2003 was the lowest since 1987. The number of juvenile arrests in 2003 for murder and for forcible rape were both lower than in any year since at least 1980.