

# Preventing Crime with Pre-kindergarten: A Critical Investment in Alabama's Safety

## A Research Brief by FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is an anti-crime organization of more than 3,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors nationwide, including more than 15 in Alabama. Our members believe the best way to prevent crime is to give kids the right start in life.

### Summary

Quality pre-kindergarten programs help children learn to get along with others and begin school ready to succeed. Sixty-six percent of kindergarten teachers said children who attended pre-kindergarten are "substantially better prepared" to start and succeed in school. Research also shows pre-kindergarten programs later result in lower drug use, higher graduation rates, fewer families receiving welfare, and lower crime. Alabama has taken some steps in the right direction by funding a state pre-kindergarten program. Nevertheless, thousands of Alabama's children are denied access to early learning programs due to lack of adequate state and federal funding. This compromises the future of young children and threatens public safety. Federal and state governments should increase funding so all families have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs.

### Quality Pre-kindergarten Cuts Crime

At-risk children who attend quality pre-kindergarten programs improve their language and social skills and experience later benefits such as lower arrest rates. For example:

- Chicago's federally funded Child-Parent Centers have served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds from low-income neighborhoods since 1967. Research shows that similar children were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who attended the program. This program will have prevented an estimated 33,000 crimes by the time the children already served reach the age of 18.

- Michigan's High/Scope Perry Preschool program served three- and four-year-old children from low-income families. Children randomly assigned to a control group were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than those assigned to attend the program.

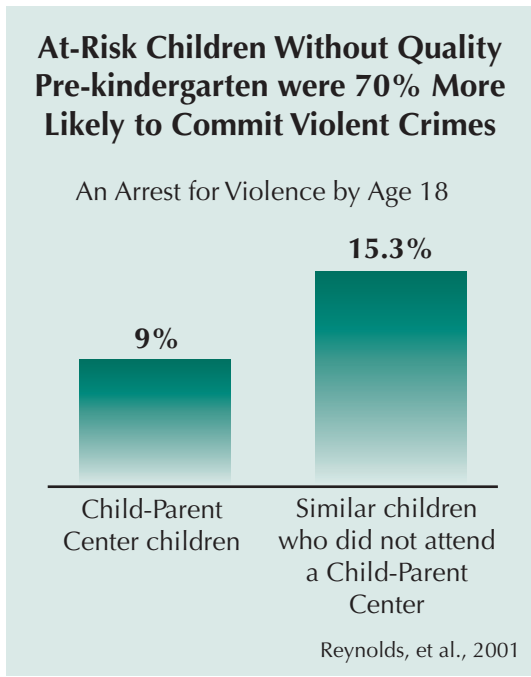
### Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-k

Many parents cannot afford to pay for quality pre-kindergarten services any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed. One year of quality pre-kindergarten for a three- or four-year-old, such as the Chicago Child-Parent Center or Head Start, costs over \$7,000—more than the average cost of public college tuition in Alabama.

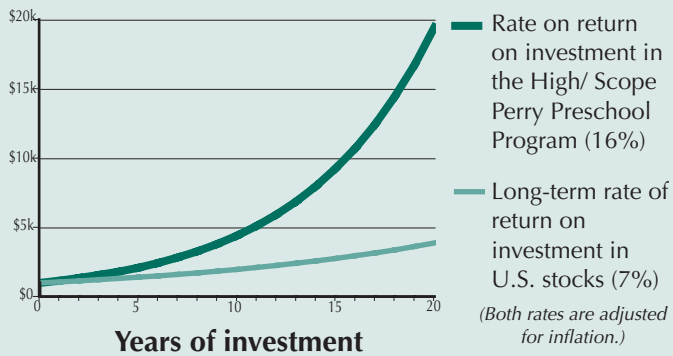
Quality programs prepare children for kindergarten, while also providing a stimulating and safe environment for children during the parents' workday. In Alabama, 64 percent or 213,223 children under the age of six have both parents or their only parent in the workforce, and are, therefore, in the care of someone other than

their parent(s) during the work day. Too often, they are in "child storage" (for instance, parked in front of a TV set), instead of in a quality early learning environment.

Quality programs have well-trained and well-compensated teachers, preferably with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and quality curricula that include strong social skills training. Model programs have 5 to 10 children per staff member, class sizes of 12



**A \$1,000 Investment in Quality Pre-kindergarten Returns over \$19,000 in 20 Years while a Stock Market Investment Returns less than \$4,000**



Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003 & Farrell, 2002.

to 20 children, and a strong parent-involvement component. Funding must be adequate to meet these quality standards.

**Services Denied to At-risk Kids**

Inadequate funding denies thousands of Alabama’s children, especially those most at-risk, access to quality pre-kindergarten. The federally-funded Head Start program for children in poverty serves only five out of 10 eligible children nationwide due to inadequate funding. In Alabama, Head Start and the state-funded pre-kindergarten program together served approximately 17,392 children in 2005. The data also show that only 14 percent of all three- and four-year-olds were served by these programs.

Another federally funded program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), helps low-income parents pay for child care. This program is so inadequately funded that nationally only one in seven eligible children received federal CCDBG support.

Thirty-nine states, including Alabama, provide voluntary pre-kindergarten, and some are considering funding universally available pre-kindergarten. Long-term data on the effects of state pre-kindergarten are not yet available, but research on Oklahoma’s universal Pre-K program shows that after one year of pre-kindergarten, it is helping to close the gap between advantaged and

disadvantaged children, and children’s overall test scores increased by 16 percent.

**Investments that Save Money**

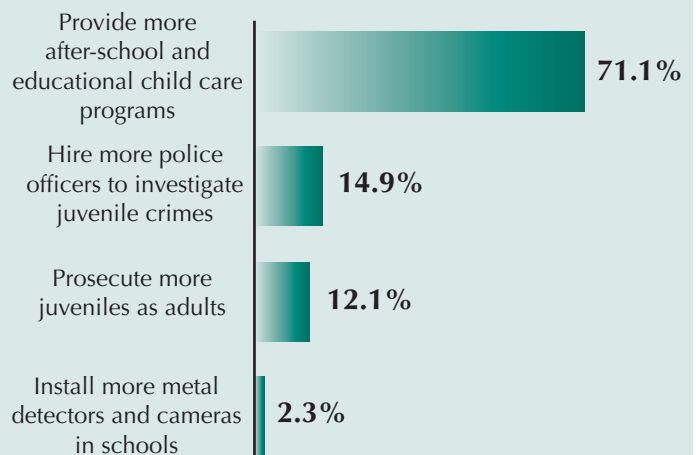
The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved more than \$17 (including more than \$11 in crime savings) for every \$1 invested. An analysis by Arthur Rolnick of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, shows that the annual return on investment in this program is 16 percent after adjusting for inflation, in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent annually after adjusting for inflation.

**Law Enforcement Leaders are United**

In response to an independent survey, an overwhelming 71 percent of the nation’s law enforcement leaders chose providing “more after-school programs and educational child care programs” as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime. If Alabama is really serious about cutting crime, additional state and federal funds must be allocated so that all children can receive quality pre-kindergarten services.

**National Law Enforcement Leaders Choose Investments in Kids to Reduce Youth Violence and Crime**

What is the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime?



Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, 2000

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Source citation and other research are available at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1212 New York Ave., NW, Ste 300, Washington, D.C., 20005, 202-776-0027.

# Endnotes

## Summary

Sixty-six percent of kindergarten teachers rated children who attended pre-kindergarten as "substantially better prepared" to start and succeed in school: Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2004). *National Kindergarten Teacher Survey 2004*. Retrieved from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids website at: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/bts04poll.pdf>

## Quality Pre-kindergarten Programs Cut Crime

### Chicago Child-Parent Centers research results:

Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 285(18), 2339-2346.

### High/Scope Perry Preschool research results:

Schweinhart, L.J., Barnes, H.V., & Weikart, D.P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

## Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-k

### Cost of one year of quality pre-kindergarten:

The average yearly cost per child of the Chicago Child Parent Centers is \$7,211, see: Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., (2006). Prevention and Cost-Effectiveness in Early Intervention: A 20-year Follow-up of a Child-Parent Center Cohort. *McEvoy Lecture Series on Early Childhood and Public Policy*. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The average cost per child enrolled in Head Start is \$7,287, See: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau. (2006). *Head Start program fact sheet, fiscal year 2006*. Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2006.htm>

### Public college tuition in Alabama:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. (2006). *Student charges and financial aid: 2005-2006*. Washington DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The average cost of tuition and fees for a public four-year institution in Alabama was \$4,773 for the 2005-2006 academic year. Retrieved from: [http://www.aascu.org/pdf/06\\_charges.pdf](http://www.aascu.org/pdf/06_charges.pdf)

### 213,223 children under age 6 in Alabama are in nonparental care:

The percentage of children under age 6 in Alabama who have both or their only parent in the labor force was determined by dividing the number of children under age 6 with both or their only parent in the labor force [n=213,223-which was computed by adding the following subtotals: 119,759 (children living with both parents/both parents in labor force); 11,593 (children living with father only/father in labor force); and 81,871 (children living with mother only/mother in labor force)] by the total number of children under age 6 (n=331,909). For these figures, see: U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). *B23008-Age of own families under 18 years in families and subfamilies by living arrangements by employment status of parents-Universe: Own children under 18 years in families and subfamilies*. American Community Survey. Retrieved from: [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)

### Quality programs have well-trained staff, low staff turnover rates, and competitive teacher salaries:

Howes, C., & Brown, J. (2000). *Improving child care quality: A guide for Proposition 10 commissions*. Retrieved from UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities web site: <http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/reports/materials/child.pdf>; Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (1993). *National child care staffing study revisited: Four years in the life of center-based child care*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce; Whitebrook, M. et al. (2001). *Then and now Changes in child care staffing, 1994-2000* (Technical Report). Washington, DC: Center for Child Care Workforce. All three cited in Barnett, W.S. (2003). *Better teachers, better preschools: Student achievement linked to teacher qualifications*. Retrieved from National Institute of Early Education Research web site: <http://www.nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=62>

### Model programs have 5-10 children per staff member, class sizes of 12-20 children, and a strong parent involvement component:

Child: staff ratios for the following model programs are: Chicago's Child Parent Centers (1:8); High/Scope Perry preschool a maximum teacher: child ratio of 1:10 for 4 year olds and 1:8.5 for 3 year olds, however, in reality Head Start programs exceed their own standards. Class sizes for the following model programs are: Chicago's Child Parent Centers (17); High/Scope Perry Preschool (15-16 for the preschool curriculum study); Abecedarian (12); Head Start (13); The mandated class size maximum is 20 for 4 year olds and 17 for 3 year olds, however, in reality Head Start programs exceed their own standards. Model programs are characterized by a strong parent-involvement component, such as the intensive parent coaching in the Chicago Child Parent Centers, the home-visits in the High/Scope Perry Preschool, and the parent volunteers in Head Start. The National Institute for Early Education Research specifies quality standards in their annual preschool report, with three of the main criterion being maximum class sizes of 20 or less, staff-child ratios of 1:10 or better, and site visits. Barnett, W., Hustedt, J., Robin, K., & Schulman, K. (2005). *The State of Preschool 2005*. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Jersey: Rutgers University.

For Chicago Child Parent Centers, see: Reynolds, A.J. (2000). *Success in early intervention: The Chicago Child-Parent Centers*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. For Perry Preschool, see: Schweinhart, L.J., Barnes, H.V., & Weikart, D.P. (1993). *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press. For Abecedarian, see: Campbell, F.A., Pungello, E.P., Miller-Johnson, S., Burchinal, M., & Ramey, C.T. (2001). The development of cognitive and academic abilities: growth curves from an early childhood education experiment. *Developmental Psychology*. 37(2), 231-242. For Head Start, see: Zill, N. et al. (2003). *Head Start FACES 2000: A whole-child perspective on program performance*. Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Outcomes Research and Evaluation & Head Start Bureau.

## Services Denied to At-risk Kids

### Head Start serves only five out of ten eligible children nationwide:

The percentage of income-eligible children who are enrolled in Head Start was computed by dividing the number of 3- and 4-year-old children served in 2004 (n=779,032) by the number of 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty 2004 (n=1,624,000). For the number 3- and 4-year-old children served by Head Start, see: U.S. Department of Health & Social Services, Administration for Children & Families, Head Start Bureau. (2005). Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2005.htm> For number of 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty, see: U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). *Single year of age-Poverty status: 2004, Below 100% of poverty line-all races*. Annual Demographic survey, March supplement. Retrieved from: [http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005/pov/new34\\_100\\_01.htm](http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005/pov/new34_100_01.htm).

### Head Start and the state-funded pre-kindergarten program together served approximately 17,392 children in Alabama in 2005:

The number of children served by these two programs was computed by adding the number of 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled in the state pre-kindergarten program and the number of children (of any age, but most are ages 3 and 4) enrolled in Head Start. For the number of children served by the state pre-kindergarten program and the state-funded Head Start program, see: Barnett, W. S., Hustedt, J., Robin, K., & Schulman, K. (2005). *The State of Preschool 2005*. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Jersey: Rutgers University. For the number of children served by Head Start using federal funds, 2005 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data were obtained from Kenneth Robin, Assistant Research Professor, National Institute of Early Education Research, personal communication, May 2006.

### Only 14 percent of all three and four year olds were served by these programs:

The percent of three and four year olds served was computed by dividing the number of children served (n=16,461) by the total number of three- and four-year-olds in Alabama (n=119,261). For the total number of three- and four-year-olds, see: U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). *Population Estimates, State Population Datasets (State by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin-6 Race Groups)*. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/popest/datasets.html>; Robin, K. Assistant Research Professor, National Institute of Early Education Research.

Personal Communication. May 2006.

Only one in seven eligible families received Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidies:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Children served in fiscal year 1999 (average monthly). Retrieved from: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2000/cctable.htm>

39 states provide voluntary pre-kindergarten:

NIEER reports that 38 states provided voluntary pre-kindergarten in the 2004-2005 school year, and Florida began its pre-kindergarten program in fall 2005, totaling 39 states.

Barnett, W., Hustedt, J., Robin, K., & Schulman, K. (2005). *The State of Preschool 2005*. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Jersey: Rutgers University.

Oklahoma's universal pre-kindergarten program:

Gormley, W.T., & Phillips, D., (2003). *The Effects of Universal Pre-K in Oklahoma: Research Highlights and Policy Implications*. Retrieved from the Center for Research On Children in the United States Web site: <http://www.crocus.georgetown.edu/papers.html>

**Investments that Save Money**

High/Scope Perry Preschool cost savings:

Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., & Xiang, Z. (2004). *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through Age 40*. High/Scope Educational research Foundation. Unpublished Manuscript.

Arthur Rolnick and Rob Grunewald's analysis on investment returns:

Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003). *Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return*. Retrieved from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis web site: <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/03-03/earlychild.cfm>

Chicago Child-Parent Center cost savings:

Reynolds, A.J. et al. (2002). *Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, Washington, DC.

**Law Enforcement Leaders are United**

Law enforcement survey: Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2002).

*National law enforcement leadership survey*. Retrieved from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids web site: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/nationalkidspoll2002.pdf>. Note: Many respondents favored adopting more than one strategy, and a majority ranked hiring more police officers as the second strategy with the greatest impact.