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UNH Justiceworks Finds Intervention is More Effective than Incarceration for Juveniles

By Erika Mantz
UNH News Bureau

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DURHAM, N.H. -- It costs $198 per day to keep a juvenile incarcerated in New Hampshire, while proven prevention programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters cost less than $3 per day. This is according to "Granite Steps," a new report by Justiceworks, a northern New England consortium for the study of the prevention and control of crime based at the University of New Hampshire.

The report, the latest edition of "Benchmarks and Blueprints," highlights successful local and national prevention and intervention programs for juveniles that are not only less expensive than incarceration, but more effective. The full report with state and national resource links is available online at www.justiceworks.unh.edu.

"We know that juveniles in New Hampshire account for a large percentage of arrests and we also know which delinquency prevention and intervention programs work well and are cost effective," says state Attorney General Philip McLaughlin. "'Granite Steps' brings these success stories together in a single report to serve as a model for other communities around the state that are interested in starting their own programs. It is a wonderful resource in the fight against delinquency."

Among the featured programs are:

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, a mentoring program that targets children from single-parent households and provides a one-to-one relationship between a volunteer adult and the child.

- Girls Inc. of New Hampshire, an organization that
works with economically disadvantaged and/or at-risk girls ages five to 17 and addresses topics from pregnancy prevention to math and science education.

- Mayhew Program works with at-risk New Hampshire boys and serves as a lifelong support community for them using a four-week summer camp, home visits and community service.

"These programs are relatively inexpensive compared to detaining a child," says Ted Kirkpatrick, director of Justiceworks and a UNH criminologist. "But more importantly, the programs work because they address all of the factors that contribute to a child's delinquency. They look at the influences on a child -- family, peers, school and community -- and work to minimize risk factors."

A study of delinquency prevention programs in California found that for every $1 spent on prevention, direct cost savings to law enforcement and the juvenile justice system amounts to $1.40.

The programs, both national and local, featured in this study are solid and proven to work, Kirkpatrick says. "Sometimes the biggest challenge is deciding where to start. This study provides that first step."

Based at the UNH Institute for Policy and Social Science Research, Justiceworks combines the expertise of university professors, researchers, police, judges, corrections officials and others throughout the region to serve a three-part mission:

- Provide timely and affordable evaluations of state and local programs aimed at minimizing crime and delinquency;

- Provide useful and current information about crime and crime control strategies to planners, policy makers and those with an interest in the field of criminal justice;

- Develop and provide new training opportunities in criminal justice to various audiences within the regional justice system, including victim advocates, school resource officers, and defense and prosecuting attorneys.
Printed copies of "Benchmarks and Blueprints" are available. Contact Joe Pace at 603-862-1957.

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