



Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada
Clubs Garçons et Filles du Canada

Positive choices, a better future

CREATING HEALTHY
ALTERNATIVES FOR YOUTH



SUMMER 2012



Quick facts about crime and victimization

RISK FACTORS

- Many young people are struggling with issues that are known risk factors for crime: poverty, isolation, disengagement from school and unemployment.
- Youth who experience family violence, deprivation, poor living conditions, parental drug and alcohol abuse, and those who live in transient neighbourhoods are at greater risk of being involved with the criminal justice system later in life.¹
- Young people who suffer from one or more mental health issues have been found to engage in a higher number of risk behaviours.²
- It is well understood that young people most likely to be drawn into criminal activity are living in low-income circumstances, experience social isolation, are generally less successful in school and have less hope for later success in life. More than 70% of those who enter federal prisons have not completed high-school; 70% have unstable job histories; four out of five have substance-abuse problems when they are convicted; and two out of three youth in the criminal justice system have been diagnosed with two or more mental health problems.³

CRIME RATES AND VICTIMIZATION

- In 2009, youth aged 14 to 24 were nearly 15 times more likely to be victimized than seniors. Youth who identify as homosexual, and those with disabilities are at increased risk of experiencing violence. Aboriginal youth for their part, reported violent victimization at double the rate of their non-aboriginal peers.⁴
- Statistics Canada reports a declining rate of crime committed by youth and a steady decline in the severity of youth crime over the past 10 years. Unfortunately, while property crimes, such as vandalism and graffiti have been on a sharp decline since 1992, violent crimes, such as murders, beatings and robberies have been on the rise. In 2010, the youth violent crime severity index was 5 percent higher than in 2000.⁵
- Those aged 18-24 represent 10% of the total population while accounting for 26% of those charged with violent crimes.⁶ Young women represent a minority of offenders – approximately one-quarter of youth accused by police of having committed a criminal offence.⁷
- The social and economic costs of crime are approximately \$31.4 billion annually. When intangible costs are taken into account, the estimated total costs of crime in Canada is \$99.6 billion.⁷
- The social costs associated with a life of crime are estimated between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million dollars.⁸





Young people are most at risk of engaging in violent behaviour and of being victimized during the after school hours. Both violent and non-violent police reported youth crimes occur between the end of the school day and dinner time.¹⁷

INCARCERATION

- Aboriginal and Black youth are over-represented in Canada’s prison system. Aboriginal youth comprise only 6% of the population, but they represent 31% of those in custody. The situation is also worrying for Black youth. The past 10 years have seen a 50% increase of Black offenders incarcerated in federal prisons, most of them entering the system at a younger age than their peers.^{9,10}
- The experience of incarceration has lasting consequences for youth, strengthening the influence of criminal peer networks,¹¹ and creating barriers to future employment. Considering that 50 to 75% of youth struggle with issues of mental health before they are incarcerated¹², they are likely to continue to face this difficulty in prison and upon release, posing additional challenges for their healthy reintegration into society.

GANG INVOLVEMENT

- Youth gangs are active across Canada in both large and small communities. Canada has 434 youth gangs with roughly 7,000 members nationally, almost half of them under the age of 18.¹³
- Long-term studies of adolescents in Canadian and American cities suggest that the most important risk factors for gang involvement include: negative influences in a young person’s life; limited attachment to their community; over-reliance on anti-social peers; poor parental supervision; alcohol and drug abuse; poor educational or employment opportunity; and a need for recognition and belonging.¹⁴
- Youth most likely to join gangs or those already involved in gangs tend to be from groups that suffer from the greatest levels of inequality and social disadvantage.¹⁵ Participating in a criminal lifestyle can provide them with a sense of belonging, status, protection, and a source of income.¹⁶

After-school programs make a difference

Many young people face life events and experiences that are associated with an increase in negative behaviours. Effective crime prevention programs focusing on positive youth development can mitigate the influence of risk factors.¹⁸ Providing pro-social opportunities for young people in the after-school hours can reduce their involvement in negative behaviour in the community.¹⁹ “Supervised, high-quality, challenging after-school programs have been shown to be an effective buffer against delinquency and victimization and to benefit children greatly.”²⁰

Creating the conditions for youth to experience success, meaningful activities, positive role models, and viable educational and employment opportunities should have a prominent place in any community safety strategy.

To achieve long-term impact, communities need to address the context in which youth live and provide those who stand to benefit most with the experiences they need to be successful. Many of these experiences take place during after-school hours, and have measurable impacts. Evidence is mounting on the efficacy of after-school programs in encouraging youth to make positive choices.

- After-school programs have great potential to benefit so many youth in so many different ways. A review of such programs found that “compared to doing nothing at all, having an effective [after school program] would result in ... 35% more youth improving in positive social behaviors, 30% demonstrating less problem behavior, 25% with less drug use, an additional 30% who feel more connected and bonded to their school, and 43% who feel better about themselves and their abilities.”²¹
- “Reduced incidence of behavioural problems and risk of early alcohol and other drug use and sexual activity are associated with participation in after-school programs as well as decreased involvement in violent behaviour and reduced risk of offending.”²²
- “After-school activities targeted at the ‘prime time for juvenile crime’ (such as the Boys & Girls Clubs) all have payoffs far greater than the investment.”²³ Youth enrichment programs can play a significant role in promoting healthier, more constructive ways for youth to fulfill their needs, feel good about themselves and their future.

The key to effective interventions is their reliability, accessibility and long-term commitment to young people’s well-being. “Youth themselves have voiced the importance of having positive forces such as educational and job opportunities, connection with adults, and meaningful uses of their time as key for countering ‘the draw of the streets’.”²⁴ Sustaining programs that promote such opportunities and meaningful connections is key to achieving any lasting impact.

Boys & Girls Clubs’ model for success in crime prevention

Every year, Boys & Girls Clubs across Canada engage over 200,000 young people in safe, accessible environments, where every one of them can achieve their full potential. Clubs provide the key elements of community support that are essential for enabling healthy development and positive outcomes for children and youth.

Boys & Girls Clubs have developed programs in the areas of primary prevention with the main emphasis being preparation for successful adulthood. We provide the essential components of what research tells us is needed for crime prevention and what young people themselves say they need – meaningful activities, supports to education, employment, volunteer opportunities, social and life skills, mentors and adult role models.



In 2008, the National Crime Prevention Centre noted Boys & Girls Clubs' ability to address early risk factors for crime in youth and families. They cited a review of 21 Club program evaluations over two decades that found a positive impact on a young person's school life, family life, and sense of belonging to a community. 74% of youth who responded to evaluations "felt that the Clubs helped them to be able to avoid coming into conflict with the law".²⁵

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS' OVERALL APPROACH MITIGATES RISK FACTORS FOR CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION

The right environment at the right time

Boys & Girls Clubs offer young people respectful, enriching and engaging environments that are known to promote safety, fun, inclusion and respect. They are open during critical out-of-school hours when children and youth are most vulnerable to violence and negative influences. After-school programs and evening drop-ins for youth offer young people a first connection to their local Club, its supportive staff and volunteers. The right environment is often the beginning of a deeper engagement in Club activities and the foundation for strong relationships with caring adults and peers.

The right environment is important because young people who have a safe place to go during out-of-schools are less likely to be victimized, abuse substances, or run afoul of the law.²⁶



All Boys & Girls Clubs offer after-school programs for children 6 to 12, and many engage younger children, adolescents, young adults and families.

Boys & Girls Club of LaSalle is engaging youth ages 12 to 18 in community parks and public spaces. Club staff offer a range of activities from sports to arts, and a consistent presence that allows them to develop strong connections with local youth. Their efforts and those of other community organizations have reduced drug and alcohol consumption and vandalism in public spaces.

In order to create the right conditions for young people to participate in Club activities, Toronto-Kiwanis Boys & Girls Clubs started a Safe Walk Program. Following an escalation in gun violence in the community, the Club hired teens to accompany younger children from school to the Club, and later walk them home. Safe Walk has been running since 2004, accompanying 300 children each year, while also employing youth and allowing them to be role models in their community.

Nurturing positive relationships with peers and adults

Boys & Girls Clubs nurture the kinds of relationships that young people can count on. Club staff and volunteers develop mentoring relationships with youth and create a positive environment for peer interactions.²⁷ They balance encouragement with clear and consistent rules, structures, boundaries and expectations that reinforce positive and responsible behaviours.

Community support in the form of caring interactions between non-parental adults, children and youth is a highly recognized protective factor, one that may be more amenable to intervention than other types of protective factors.²⁸ Caring adults provide young people with a sense of belonging, acceptance, empowerment and connection.²⁹

Ninety-six percent of Club participants reported the presence of at least one supportive adult at the Club and "that at least one adult there was setting high expectations for them."³⁰ The overwhelming majority of Boys & Girls Clubs alumni (93%) credit a particular staff member for developing, helping and supporting them.³¹ Interactions with supportive adults and peers in the Club environment are identified by participants and staff as especially important in promoting positive youth development.³²

Positive relationships are important because the presence of strong relationships with adults and role models has been correlated with lower rates of substance use and exposure to violence, stronger connections to school and increased academic performance.^{33,34,35} Having positive peers increases the odds of emotional resilience in youth who have been exposed to violence, and is a positive influence that decreases the likelihood of problem behaviour. Such relationships are especially important during adolescence.³⁶

Boys & Girls Club of Ponoka is reaching out to youth who struggle to develop positive relationships with adults and peers. Meeting in small, gender-specific groups, participants meet weekly with an adult mentor who helps them establish healthy boundaries, engage in respectful communications, and manage their emotions constructively. Youth who were having trouble functioning in social settings are learning to develop meaningful relationships.



Michelle [Winnipeg Club staff member] picked me out and acknowledged leadership abilities I didn't know I had. She encouraged me to take on opportunities I didn't believe I could do. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be where I am today.

- Armando Galindo, Boys & Girls Clubs Alumni and volunteer

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE

Physical activity, health and safety

Clubs offer programs that develop and increase young people's capacity to make healthy choices and engage in behaviours that promote their safety and well-being. A range of programs are offered that develop positive attitudes and behaviours related to physical activity, healthy eating, and sexuality. Young people learn to make constructive use of leisure time, they gain skills for stress management, an appreciation for the environment, and the capacity to nurture their own well-being and that of others.

Promoting physical activity, health and safety is important because recreation and leisure activities are known to help young people develop a positive sense of self. They help reduce depression, anxiety and stress, loneliness, self-destructive behaviour and crime.³⁷ Physical activity alone has been demonstrated to have broad effects including improved academic performance, reduced violence, smoking and substance abuse.³⁸



Young people get in trouble when they challenge themselves in negative ways. Cranbrook Boys & Girls Club challenges children ages 9 to 12 in constructive ways. When they were bored with regular programming, the Club started Youth Wise and took these 'older' children zip-lining, mountain biking, and orienteering. They even started a garden and learned to compost. Youth Wise participants are building skills they can be excited and confident about.

Leadership, growth and empowerment

Boys & Girls Clubs nurture confidence in children and youth, providing them with opportunities to develop and practice leadership skills. They learn how to participate in group processes, build consensus, and listen to each others' ideas – leadership skills that will serve them for life. Solid evidence supports social development programs as effective means of reducing youth violence.

Helping children gain life skills early on "can prevent aggression, reduce involvement in violence, improve social skills, boost educational achievement and improve job prospects" – benefits that have the potential to last into adulthood.³⁹ The effectiveness of such programs is especially evident in children from impoverished families and communities.⁴⁰

Promoting leadership, growth and empowerment is important because involving young people in community activities and volunteerism is the best prevention against disengagement and negative behaviours. Access to supportive relationships with adults and peers, as well as involvement in engaging activities and learning experiences are essential to the ability of children and youth to become healthy, successful and contributing adults.^{41,42}

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada's own Keystone program is implemented in Clubs across the country. Keystone helps young people 14 and older channel their energy in a positive direction. Under the guidance of Club staff and volunteers, youth plan activities based on their own interests and the needs of their community. It's an opportunity to get involved. Through Keystone, youth learn to work collaboratively and with respect. They gain leadership skills and form lasting friendships with other youth across the country – an experience that builds self-confidence and self-esteem.

Learning and career development

Boys & Girls Clubs programs enable children and youth to develop and achieve their educational goals and career aspirations. Clubs encourage young people to stay in school and value learning; they offer homework and reading clubs, summer learning programs, tutoring, scholarships for post-secondary education, and other academic support. Many Clubs also offer dance, music, drama, and digital arts programs to help children and youth express themselves creatively and explore their talents.

Boys & Girls Clubs are leaders in youth employment, hiring some 3,500 youth each year and engaging even more as volunteers and mentors to younger children. The experience and skills youth acquire help them obtain future employment, and some have even been inspired to pursue postsecondary education. Many of these young leaders are Club Alumni and serve as an inspiration to younger Club members.

Promoting learning and career development is important because youth with a grade twelve education are twice as likely to be employed. They are less likely to receive social assistance, engage in anti-social or self-destructive behaviour, and be involved in the justice system.⁴³ Education, skills training and apprenticeships help promote prosocial lifestyle options.⁴⁴



I've always believed that it is irresponsible to ask young people to overcome obstacles and hardship without showing them other young people who have done it. No organization does that better than Boys & Girls Clubs.

- Kevin Chief, MLA for Point Douglas, Manitoba, Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities

Each year, over 800 children participate in Boys & Girls Clubs of Winnipeg's summer learning enrichment program. Children living in families with low incomes, especially Aboriginal and immigrant children, are losing academic ground because they have fewer opportunities to participate in enriching summer programs. By engaging them in learning opportunities, and by fostering parental and community involvement, the Community School Investigators' Summer Learning Program helps make sure young people start the school year on more equal footing – because when they do, they perform just as well as their peers.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS WORK WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Boys & Girls Clubs are located in communities that face many challenges, but that have great potential. They develop flexible programs that tap into this potential and young people's own interests.

Most youth have resources in their families and communities that provide them with the skills and opportunities to be successful and make positive choices. Every young person deserves to have these opportunities.

Many Boys & Girls Clubs offer parenting programs that are improving familial relations and giving young people the best start in life. Working with young children increases the chances of successfully preventing aggressive attitudes and behaviours.⁴⁵ Programs that nurture child/parent and caregiver relationships and that help build skills around parenting are well supported by evidence and offer a very high return on investment.⁴⁶

Boys & Girls Clubs – Pacific Region, offers a province-wide network of parenting programs for over 500 parents of preteens and teens each year. These educational and group support programs assist to reduce conflict within families, build stronger family relationships and support families through challenging moments. Groups address everything from communication skills to boundary setting, perspective taking, non-punitive parenting practices, and parental self-care. These parenting programs are now being offered at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary and we hope to see them expand even further across the country.

Clubs also support and encourage family participation, and in some cases engage Aboriginal Elders, in programs. They work collaboratively with local communities to nurture the health and aspirations of young people. Providing social and emotional supports to meet children and youth's developmental needs has been proven to make a difference in under-resourced neighbourhoods.⁴⁷ By ensuring our programs are culturally appropriate, we can be most effective in reducing risk factors for crime.⁴⁸



Given the growing population of Aboriginal children and youth in the city, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary is providing all their staff with training on inter-generational trauma and the history of residential schools' impact on First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

Boys & Girls Club of LaSalle has partnered with other community organizations to reach out to Black Anglophone youth who are experiencing difficulties. Sensitive to their cultural backgrounds, the Club has gained the trust of youth and their families. Each year, some 40 families and over 130 youth, the majority living in low socio-economic conditions, draw on support from the Club to attend school meetings or court appearances, and even to act as mediator between youth and police. With the right help, most families are able to get back on track within a year.

Building strong families and communities is important because living in a caring, trusting and cohesive community can make young people more resilient to adversity. It also "protects victims against increase in vulnerability or embodiment of stress over time". "Community capacity building efforts may be particularly useful interventions in sustaining emotional resilience for victims."⁴⁹

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PREVENT CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION

Social interventions, such as recreation, leadership development and educational support yield positive, measurable benefits. Improving the quality of life in a high-risk neighbourhood through free recreational activities for young people, more jobs for youth and better use of the physical space has been shown to reduce police reported crime by 60% over a 1 ½ year period.⁵⁰

Compared to other measures of crime control, crime prevention through social development is cost-effective. One study found that it cost taxpayers seven times more to achieve a 10 percent reduction in crime through incarceration than through social development.⁵¹ A dollar for enriched child care saves \$17 in criminal justice costs.⁵²



Promising programs for those hardest to reach

Boys & Girls Clubs have developed programs that reach out and engage children and youth who face multiple risk factors associated with crime, victimization and gang involvement.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach program for instance, was rated a promising approach by the National Crime Prevention Centre. Targeted in its objectives, this program builds "a network of community representatives (including community agencies, schools, social service organizations, courts, and police and other law enforcement officials) to assess their local gang problem".⁵⁴ Club staff recruit young people between the ages of 6 to 18 who may be tempted to join a gang and focus "efforts and resources on the reduction of gang involvement by providing at risk youth with alternative activities".⁵⁵

The initiative has shown very positive results. Youth involved in the program were less likely to start wearing gang colours, had fewer contacts with the justice system and were less likely to engage in negative behaviours such as stealing and smoking marijuana. Participants improved their grades and their attitudes towards school. They were also found to be engaged in more constructive after-school activities and to have more positive relationships with peers and family.⁵⁶

Much can be learned from the Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach Program:

- "High-risk youth and teens can be reached and drawn in by programming and opportunities that are not greatly specialized, such as recreational activities, a place to hang out and supportive staff."
- "Clubs are able to reach older youth (into their mid-teens) and higher risk youth [indicating] that teens and youth who have been in trouble are not unamenable to being involved in these types of conventional activities."
- Key factors of success in reaching and retaining youth "appear to be active outreach and recruitment, which require time and support on the part of the staff to help the youth become fully integrated and 'hooked' into the full range of activities the Clubs have to offer."

- "Reaching these high-risk youth is achievable by a mainstream youth-serving institution, and does not have to be created from the ground up. Clubs were able to build staff buy-in to reach out to these youth and to draw them into their existing Club services (prevention) or create alternative projects to enhance the likelihood of attracting gang members or youth highly associated with the gang lifestyle (intervention). Clubs were also able to build relationships with community agencies – such as law enforcement and schools – that were integral to the success of the initiatives."⁵⁷

In many regions of Canada, Boys & Girls Clubs offer a range of programs for highly vulnerable youth, all of which share a similar approach.

Okanagan Boys & Girls Clubs offer a purpose driven drop-in program and shelter for homeless youth and those at risk of homelessness, aged 13 -18 years. The program provides a safe, supportive environment, basic needs, recreational activities and opportunities, as well as life-skills training. Youth can access showers, laundry services, food and drink, internet, and resource information and many other services in the same building. Referrals to other youth services are available through the staff and all services are free of charge.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary has set up a phone line for anyone to access information on the supports available to youth who are on the street or at risk of homelessness. Police officers, teachers, concerned neighbours, parents, and youth themselves use the line to express concern for someone they know. When a call is received, the Club is able to intervene immediately – often meeting face-to-face within a day – and mobilize the resources necessary to address this young person's situation in a comprehensive way.

In a 2002 study, US Senator and now Vice-President Joseph Biden noted that wherever there is a Boys & Girls Club, there is a significant reduction in crime.⁵³ Clubs help young people build the skills and abilities that allow them to solve problems, overcome disadvantages, and deal with life's challenges by making positive choices.



prevention



Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC offers counselling programs for youth and families struggling with issues related to substance abuse. They offer a supportive atmosphere where youth can take part in a wide range of services including individual and family counselling, drop-in, social-recreational activities, crisis intervention referrals, and substance abuse education. Over 800 individuals access their Odyssey and Nexus programs each year.

Boys & Girls Clubs Alumni attest to the influence of Clubs on their life. A national survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid determined that “Boys and Girls Club alumni view their experiences as highly positive, critical to their success, and for many, essential to their survival. Participation in Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada provided valuable benefits that have proven to last a lifetime.” The majority (73%) say their involvement with their Club helped them avoid trouble with the law, 95% say it provided them with valuable life skills and 97% say they are better off today.

REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE MOST VULNERABLE IS A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO PREVENT CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION

Building gang prevention and intervention initiatives within existing organizations has important advantages. Goals can be achieved at a reasonable and incremental cost “in large part because they can build on their existing resources, including facilities, staff, management and infrastructure, and the history and experience Boys & Girls Clubs have working with youth.”⁵⁸ There is great advantage to enhancing the services of established agencies so they are able to work with harder-to-reach youth.

One of the main principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act is to foster responsibility and ensure accountability and meaningful consequences and effective rehabilitation and reintegration. Research shows that the sooner youth are engaged in addressing their wrongdoing, the more directly they will understand the consequences of their actions. Moreover, timely intervention has proven to reduce the rate of recidivism.

- Honourable Madam Justice M. T. Devlin

I joined the Peer Mentor Training, do the drop-in weekly and see my counsellor once per week. I've also embraced a sober life with Odyssey's help.

- participant in Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC's Odyssey program

intervention

Helping youth get back on track

A number of Clubs provide juvenile offender, diversion and community accountability programs – working with youth who are becoming known to police or who have committed a first offence. Clubs work with the young offender, the community and with victims (when appropriate) to ensure accountability and reparations for wrongdoing. Boys & Girls Clubs are an ideal organization to be running such programs. Community service in a Club can familiarize a young person with Club services, connect them to supportive teen programs and mentors – it can translate into years of constructive engagement with their community.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Durham run a Youth Justice Committee program offering those who commit a minor offence an opportunity to be held accountable for their actions. A committee of staff and volunteers meets with each young person referred to the program within three weeks of their first appearance before the courts, outlines a reparations plan, and accompanies them in making amends for their wrongdoing. In 95% of the cases, youth who participate in the YJC program meet all the courts' conditions and see the charges against them dropped. Such a restorative approach is known to work and is highly regarded by many of those who see these young people go through the courts.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary works with First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth serving time at the Calgary Young Offenders Centre for mistakes they have made. Two staff members offer youth hands on experiences such as smudging and sweat lodges, to help them connect to their culture and heal some of the intergenerational trauma they and their communities are facing. Noticing that many youth did not have the skills to navigate the resources that would help them reintegrate society once their sentence was served, the Club reached out to the Calgary Young Offenders Centre to increase support to Aboriginal youth. Through these efforts, Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary is helping Aboriginal youth learn from their mistakes and change the course of their lives.



The program helped me find balance in my life and learn about myself. My counsellor helped me with my drug and alcohol struggles, relationships and daily problems.

- participant in Boys & Girls Clubs of South Coast BC's Odyssey program

My ambitions and goals are clear to me now and this is why I am so grateful for this incident. Without it, I can honestly admit that I would not have the clarity and motivation that I have now. I would like to say thank you to the staff at the Eastview Boys & Girls Club and the judicial system for giving me the chance to express my thoughts on the incident. This second chance will not go to waste. I plan to take what I have learned and turn that into a happy and successful life that I plan to live. Thank you once again for this great opportunity with upmost sincerity and appreciation.

- Youth to YJC Program



COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS ARE A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

Boys & Girls Club of Durham's Youth Justice Committee costs a mere \$70,000 per year. In 2011, they served 350 young people. The \$200 that was spent to refer a young person to this highly successful program is much more cost effective than the average \$110,00 society would pay to incarcerate them.⁵⁹ For many first time offenders, learning about the impact of their actions and repairing the wrong they have done is the opportunity they need to get their life back on track.

We know what needs to be done

Evidence overwhelmingly supports social development as an effective crime prevention measure. We know what to do and what is working. Across the country, communities are adopting evidence-based approaches to preventing crime. Quality programs are yielding positive results, but lack the resources necessary to offer essential programs in a sustained and consistent way. The benefits of doing things right will be enormous and self-reinforcing – for youth, their families, and all of Canada.

1. ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF CRIME

All young people deserve to grow up in a healthy environment that offers them opportunities to develop their full potential in life. Effective crime prevention must include broad measures to support the well-being of young people, including:

- Commitments and action by federal, provincial and territorial governments to address child poverty, homelessness and poor housing conditions for families.
- Leadership by governments, non-profit organizations and the private sector to promote positive mental health early in life and ensure the proper supports are in place for young people who experience mental health and addiction issues.⁶⁰
- Collaboration between the Government of Canada and First Nation, Inuit and Métis leaders to ensure quality education that will prepare every child and youth to take full advantage of the education and career opportunities that are readily available to other students across the country.⁶¹



2. INCREASE INVESTMENT IN PREVENTING CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION

The criminal justice system has an important role to play in community safety. However, the proportion of spending between that system and crime prevention should align with the evidence showing the cost-benefit of investing in prevention programs.

The criminal justice system – including police, courts, and correctional services – accounts for \$15 billion dollars per year.⁶² These costs are likely to be increasing as policing costs alone amounted to \$12 billion in 2010.⁶³ In contrast, the National Crime Prevention Centre of Public Safety Canada has an annual budget of \$63 million, with \$45 million in grants and contributions going to short-term community-based prevention programs.⁶⁴ This represents less than 0.4 percent of the federal criminal justice budget.

Boys & Girls Clubs call on federal, provincial and territorial governments to make a sustained investment in positive youth development programs, gang prevention and diversion initiatives, and community youth justice programs. Only by allocating more resources will we make our communities safer for everyone.

3. WORK WITH EXISTING, EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada encourage provincial, territorial and federal governments to support and engage non-profit organizations that are able to reach youth facing numerous risk and vulnerability factors. Organizations providing youth development programs during out-of-school hours are well-placed to provide further support to children and youth who require it.

Working through established and credible organizations ensures programs are cost effective and make use of already available resources. They also have much to contribute towards elaborating policies and programs that promote positive physical and mental health outcomes for all young people.

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