

An Empowered Approach to Prevent Youth Violence

Submitted to

Suffolk Initiative on Youth

Prepared by

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August 2006



City Council of the City of Suffolk

The Honorable, Linda Johnson, Mayor, Sleepy Hole Borough
The Honorable, Curtis Milteer, Vice Mayor, Whaleyville Borough
The Honorable, Joseph Barlow, Councilman, Chuckatuck Borough
The Honorable, Leroy Bennett, Councilman, Nansemond Borough
The Honorable, Charles Brown, Councilman, Cypress Borough
The Honorable, Jeffrey Gardy, Councilman, Holy Neck Borough
The Honorable, Charles Parr, Councilman, Suffolk Borough

To the City Council of the City of Suffolk, this report is the result of your dedication and leadership to the citizens of the City of Suffolk. As a result of your vision and guidance, the City of Suffolk, through the Suffolk Initiative on Youth (SIY), has come together to develop a comprehensive strategy and plan to address youth crime and violence in our community. The youth violence prevention plan is the result of a six month planning process that involved members of city council, council designees, city agencies and departments, citizens, faith-based organizations, local law enforcement agencies, our school system, community service providers, and youth. The implementation of this plan will provide greater opportunities for our young people to learn, grow, and become productive members of the community. The City of Suffolk is indebted to you for this initiative.

Suffolk Initiative on Youth Workgroup

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The Honorable Leroy Bennett Councilman Nansemond Borough Suffolk, Virginia	The Honorable Charles Brown Councilman Cypress Borough Suffolk, Virginia
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Charles Christian	Whaleyville Borough
Reverend Mark Croston	Nansemond Borough
Joe Jones	Holy Neck Borough
Reverend Tim Piland	Sleepy Hole Borough
Tom Williams	Suffolk Borough
Sharon Walker	Cypress Borough

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Cynthia Rohlf	Assistant City Manager for Management Services
Chief William Freeman	Chief of Police
Dennis Craff	Director of Communications
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The authors of this report are indebted to the members of the workgroup for their assistance and input throughout this process. Any opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be regarded as official opinion on the part of any of the workgroup members.

**YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION PLAN
SUFFOLK INITIATIVE ON YOUTH
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Youth violence is a growing problem in communities across the Hampton Roads region. In this project, six activities provided a foundation from which a youth violence prevention plan for the city of Suffolk could be developed. These activities included the following:

- An analysis of risk factors for youth violence in Suffolk
- A recidivism study focusing on repeat offending among young offenders
- Development of a program inventory using the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Strategic Planning Tool
- Focus groups with various stakeholders
- Household interviews with residents in high crime neighborhoods and comparison low crime areas
- Two community forums addressing the results of the above efforts

Activities and tasks were completed by working with five sub-workgroups created as part of the Suffolk Initiative on Youth.

In one phase of the project, we worked with the Suffolk Initiative on Youth to assess specific risk factors for youth violence in Suffolk. In doing so, the research team from Old Dominion University reviewed existing data sources (e.g., census, education, public health, and criminal justice) and examined demographic characteristics and individual, school, and family risk factors for the city of Suffolk. Comparisons were drawn between patterns and trends found in Suffolk with those found in the rest of the Commonwealth. The analysis of city-state comparison provided a benchmark for assessing problem areas for the city of Suffolk. These analyses demonstrated that school disciplinary reports are higher in Suffolk schools than they are neighboring communities and the state as a whole. Also, per capita alcohol consumption is higher in Suffolk than in other areas. Notably, rates of child abuse and neglect are comparatively quite low.

In another phase of the project, we worked with the police department, the prosecutor's office, and the Suffolk Juvenile and Domestic District Court to ascertain what data is available on juvenile convictions and recidivism and we conducted a general analysis of recidivism in Suffolk. Attention was given to recidivism rates and the demographic (e.g., age, race, gender) correlates of recidivism. Results from other recidivism studies found in the literature were included for comparison. Results indicated that gender was a significant predictor of recidivism, but age and race were not. Also, youth in substance abuse programs were more likely to recidivate than were other youth.

Working with the resource inventory sub-group, we identified existing youth violence prevention programs and services including those provided by the city, schools, and non-profit agencies. The resource inventory sub-workgroup contacted various stakeholders to determine which services and programs are available. Representatives from the programs were asked to complete a brief survey assessing the type of program/service provided, the risk factors their program/service addresses, and the type of population served by the service/program. This information was entered into the strategic planning tool available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide a matrix crosstabulated by age and type of program. Based on this process, we found that missing programs include school- and community-based programs, particularly those focusing specifically on preventing violence and gang-related behaviors.

Another phase of the project entailed a series of focus groups to determine how various stakeholders perceived youth violence in Suffolk. Seven focus groups were conducted with the following groups: (a) parents, (b) youth, (c) faith-based/business leaders, (d) human services workers, (e) violence prevention advocates, (f) the Suffolk Initiative on Youth committee, and (g) household interviewers. The results of these focus groups pointed to the following themes: (a) a sense of community among stakeholders, (b) the need to involve youth in prevention efforts, (c) the need to develop work programs and involve the business community in violence prevention efforts, (d) optimism about the Suffolk Initiative on Youth, (e) the need to generate positive public awareness about youth and awareness about youth development programs, (f) opportunities to develop

community-wide youth violence prevention partnerships, and (g) the role of underlying cultural influences. The results of these focus group interviews were used to develop a survey that was administered to residents of Suffolk.

Another phase of this project involved a household survey of 324 residents of Suffolk. Among other things, the 21-item survey assessed whether the community was aware of programs and services for youth and the possible barriers prohibiting the utilization of these services. The results of the survey suggest that residents, while aware of many of the programs, recognized the need for long-lasting programs and strategies to make residents aware of opportunities for Suffolk youth. The most useful public awareness strategies they cited included television and radio advertisements as well as handouts in the schools. Residents tended to assign the responsibility of youth violence prevention to families, the police, churches, and schools. When asked who was most responsible for violence prevention strategies, residents overwhelmingly assigned responsibility to families.

Two community forums were held to share the results of the above activities and solicit community input into the development of a community-wide youth violence prevention plan. At the forums, participants were asked to share what they thought should be done to prevent youth violence. Involving residents in the forum as well as the community members in the other phases of this project provides a foundation for a plan that is responsive to the community and built on the ideals of community involvement.

There are some things that are taking place. We are not just asking the question what can we do. We are saying we can do something. Churches are involved. If we had a concerted effort... We should become a united team. It's like we have a 1001 right hands that do not know anything that the left hand is doing. A lot of people are concerned and a lot of people are taking action—the police department, our rescue department, EMT, lawyers, business people.

----Comments from a parent during one of the focus groups

Based on the findings gathered in each of the phases, we developed a plan for youth violence prevention that is captured under the acronym of “S-T-O-P V-I-O-L-E-N-C-E.”

This plan involves the following activities:

Suffolk Initiative on Youth should continue its relationship building and collaborative efforts

Target youth violence with interagency/community partnerships

Office on Youth should coordinate youth development efforts

Public awareness campaign should promote awareness about programs available for youth

Value and promote diversity as a strategy to encourage collaboration

Involve businesses, schools, faith-based groups, advocates, and others in prevention efforts

Open employment doors for youth

Let youth participate in prevention efforts

Explore funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional funding agencies

Neighborhood initiatives should be promoted

Community empowerment should be stressed as a prevention ideal

Evaluate, Identify, and Implement successful programs

Strategies to continue the empowerment process in implementing youth violence prevention initiatives are suggested. In particular, in addition to building on the Suffolk Initiative on Youth’s current activities, we recommend developing various programs to address truancy, recidivism, violence in schools, and prevention of gang activities.

A key element of the plan is that both prevention and intervention ideals are included. Where appropriate, strategies to develop prevention strategies and build successful programs are suggested. As well, the need to further develop intervention processes for

specific types of offending is included. Indeed, to effectively limit youth violence, prevention ideals must be closely aligned with intervention methods.

Throughout the entire planning process, the underlying assumption has been that the ideals should be unique to the city of Suffolk and based on input from community members, service providers, professionals, business leaders, and other informed stakeholders. In doing this, the success of the plan is tied to the interests of those involved in developing the plan.

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SECTION 1
AN EMPOWERMENT APPROACH TO
PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SUFFOLK

Youth violence is a serious concern in all communities. National and statewide statistics confirm the seriousness of the issue. Consider the following:

- Across the United States, an average of 15 youth between the ages of 10-24 are murdered each day (CDC, 2006)
- In 2004, more than 750,000 youth in the same age group were treated in emergency rooms for injuries incurred from violence (CDC, 2006)
- A nationwide survey of youth revealed that one-third of high school students were in at least one fight in the prior year, and seventeen percent of the students reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife or club) the month prior to completing the survey (CDC, 2006)
- In 2003, 4,634 youth were arrested for simple assault in the Commonwealth of Virginia (Virginia Youth Violence Project, 2006).
- During the course of the 2002-2003 school year, more than 26,000 public school students were disciplined for fighting in schools in the Commonwealth (Virginia Youth Violence Project, 2006).

The city of Suffolk is similar to other cities in that concern about youth violence exists. Suffolk, however, stands apart from many other localities in that it has taken proactive steps to address youth violence with the aim of developing a solid, scientifically based youth violence prevention plan that sets forth various strategies that can be used to promote youth development while making the community safer.

The Suffolk Initiative on Youth is the cornerstone of this effort. Created in January 2006, this initiative represents a collaborative effort between various agencies, groups, and individuals. Among those involved in the effort have been members of the city council, representatives from the city manager's office, school officials, representatives from the PTA, law enforcement officials, church leaders, the Western Tidewater Community

Services Board, representatives from the office of the Commonwealth's attorney, and the redevelopment and housing authority.

According to violence prevention experts, effective violence prevention efforts require that those involved in shaping violence prevention activities do the following:

- Bring together the key leaders in a community, including a diverse planning team representing all disciplines
- Develop a shared vision for what the community should look like
- Use data to identify risk and protective factors in the community
- Identify the community's existing assets and gaps in services
- Use evidence-based strategies to meet the identified needs
- Conduct on-going evaluations of strategies and community needs (GOSAP, 2006).

In its efforts to develop an effective youth violence prevention plan meeting these ideals, the Suffolk Initiative on Youth collaborated with criminologists from Old Dominion University on a project in which residents were empowered to become involved in the planning process. This process was characterized by a series of activities (See Table 1) that utilized existing resources and the abilities of key stakeholders to understand the youth violence phenomenon in Suffolk. As shown in Table 1, the following activities were a part of the planning process:

- Creating a workgroup and sub-workgroups to guide the planning process
- Analyzing prevalent risk factors for youth violence in Suffolk
- Studying repeat offending by young people in Suffolk
- Developing a resource inventory identifying youth violence prevention programs in Suffolk
- Conducting focus groups with various stakeholders in Suffolk
- Conducting household interviews with residents of Suffolk
- Hosting two community forums to describe the results of the above efforts and solicit additional community input for the prevention plan
- Developing a youth violence prevention plan

Table 1. Empowerment Approach to Address Youth Violence in the City of Suffolk.

Task/Date	What Was Done	What Was Needed From Community
Empowerment Approach (March-July)	Community members were involved in all phases of the project.	-Assistance and input on all phases of the project.
Create Workgroup (March)	Workgroup and sub-workgroups developed	-Direction and input into who should be included on the workgroup and sub-workgroups
Analysis of Risk Factors (April)	Investigators assessed risk factors for youth violence prevalent in Suffolk. Comparisons to state risk factors were made.	-Assistance in identifying data sources -Assistance gaining access to data -Assistance organizing/understanding data
Analysis of JJS Recidivism (April-June)	Investigators assessed extent of recidivism among juveniles entering the system	-Assistance in identifying data source -Access to data -Assistance in keeping focus manageable
Resource Inventory (April-June)	Investigators used OJJDP's tool to develop a resource inventory identifying youth violence prevention programs in Suffolk.	-Assistance in identifying youth violence prevention programs -Assistance gathering information from the programs -Assistance on using the tool -Feedback on preliminary findings
Focus Group Interviews (April-June)	Investigators conducted seven focus group interviews with different stakeholders.	-Assistance in recruiting participants -Assistance in finding location for interviews -Feedback on interview questions -Participate in a focus group interview
Household Interviews (May-June)	While developing a survey instrument, investigators hired and trained up to six Suffolk residents to do household interviews. Interviewers conducted surveys in various parts of Suffolk.	-Feedback on responses -Assistance identifying community members to be hired and trained as interviewers -Assistance targeting areas for the resident interviews -Assistance publicizing the interviews
Community Forum (July)	Investigators hosted two community forums in which the findings from the project were presented and community input was sought.	-Identifying location for the forum -Attendance at the forum -Publicizing the forum
Implementation Plan (July)	Investigators used information gathered to recommend plan to prevent youth violence.	-Guidance in developing plan -Input on draft plan

Figure 1 shows the how the planning process was structured. As shown in Figure 1, the Suffolk Initiative on Youth Steering Committee oversaw the planning process. This committee shaped the overall planning process, met regularly to ensure that progress was being made, and provided direction to sub-workgroups. To ensure that the plan reflected the interests of key stakeholders, the following five sub-workgroups were created: (a) data records sub-workgroup, (b) risk factors/resource inventory sub-workgroup, (c) focus group sub-workgroup, (d) household interview sub-workgroup, and (e) community forum sub-workgroup. Members of the steering committee chaired the five sub-workgroups:

The *data records sub-workgroup* was convened in order to provide direction in effectively using available data to ensure that the planning process was scientifically grounded. Tasks assigned to this workgroup included the following activities:

- Identifying data sources
- Accessing data sources
- Managing data
- Identifying trends
- Assisting ODU research team

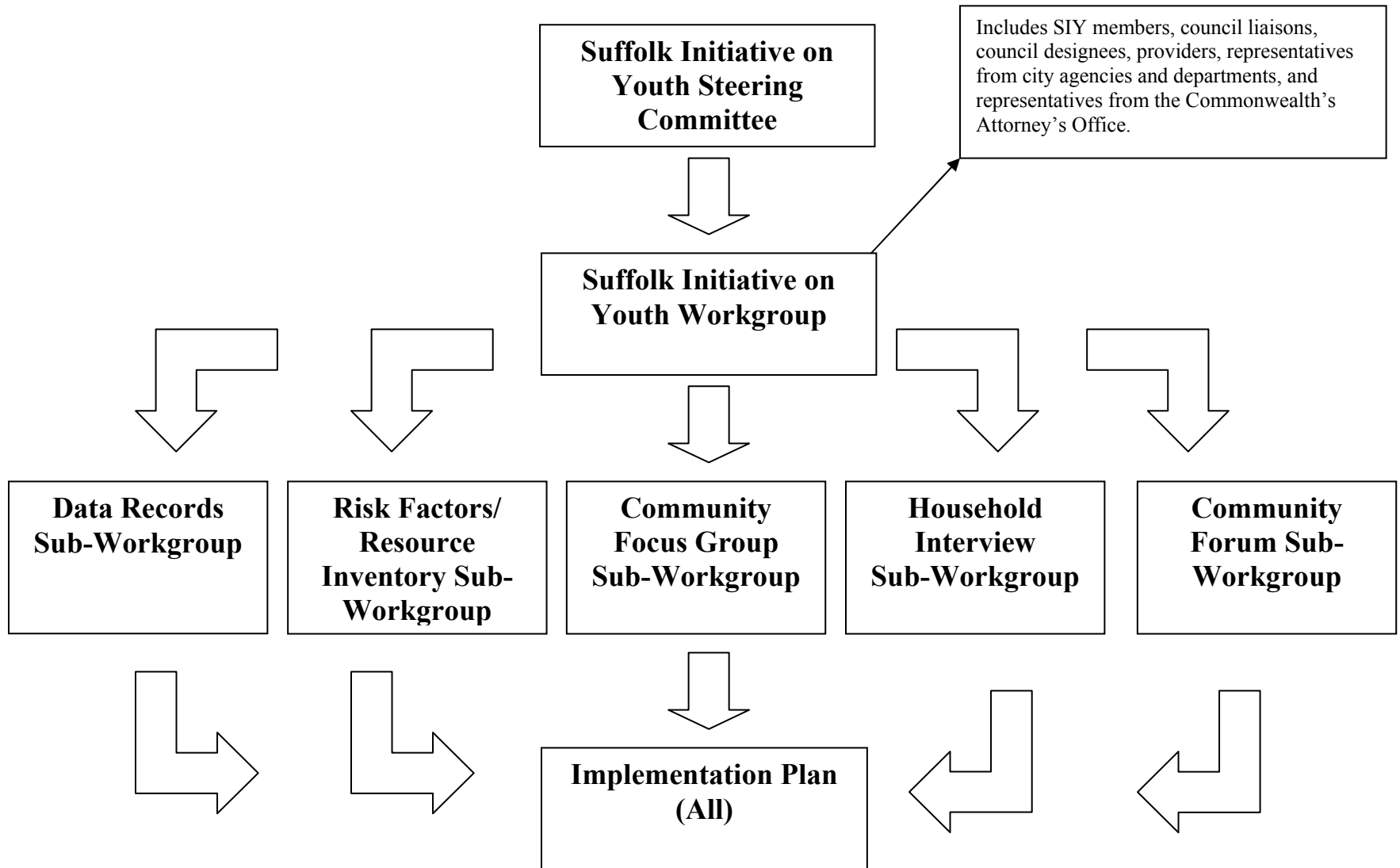
The results of the efforts of this workgroup are discussed in Section 2 of this report.

The *risk factors/resource inventory sub-workgroup* provided direction in (a) determining which youth violence risk factors are prevalent in Suffolk and (b) identifying youth development programs. This workgroup carried out the following tasks:

- Identifying and discussing risk factors
- Identifying youth violence programs
- Gathering information from the programs
- Providing access to the OJJDP strategic planning tool
- Providing feedback about the tool

The results of the efforts of this workgroup are discussed in Sections 3 and 4 of this report.

Figure 1. Organization of Empowered Approach to Understand Youth Violence.



The *community focus group sub-workgroup* was assigned the duty of organizing focus groups with various members of the community. This sub-workgroup performed the following activities:

- Recruiting focus group participants
- Finding locations for the focus groups
- Providing feedback on interview questions
- Participating in a focus group
- Helping arrange each focus group

The results of these efforts are discussed in Section 5 of this report.

The *household interview sub-workgroup* was created to provide assistance in organizing the household interviews. Using feedback provided in the community focus groups, this sub-workgroup directed its efforts towards the following:

- Reviewing and modifying the survey instrument
- Identifying community members to be hired and trained to do the interview
- Assisting in recruiting interviewers
- Identifying areas for resident interviews
- Publicizing the interviews
- Providing feedback on the responses

The input provided by the household interview sub-workgroup and findings from the interviews are discussed in Section 6 of this report.

Finally, the *community forum sub-workgroup* was instrumental in promoting awareness about the above activities and soliciting input from additional residents. This workgroup was responsible for carrying out the following tasks:

- Identifying a location for the forums
- Developing handouts for the forums
- Preparing the forum location
- Publicizing the forum
- Soliciting input about the youth violence prevention plan from respondents

The results of this workgroup are incorporated, along with the input from the above workgroups, as our recommendations for the strategic plan in Section 7 of this report. These recommendations and the findings from the activities of the workgroups were shared with the Suffolk Initiative on Youth Steering Committee. The SIY Steering Committee then used these recommendations to develop an action plan. SIY's action plan was shared with the larger workgroup. Feedback from the workgroup was incorporated into the action plan. This action plan is presented in Section 8 of this report.

Working together, these five sub-workgroups provided the guidance and direction necessary to formulate the youth violence prevention plan. Empowering members of the community to become involved in developing the plan is useful for several reasons. First, involving members in the development of the prevention plan assures that the plan includes aspects specific to the Suffolk community. Those familiar with the issues unique to Suffolk are in a prime position to guide the prevention planning process.

Second, such a process provides ownership of the final plan to those who will be carrying out the plan. By investing their time in the early stages of the plan, stakeholders are placed in a position in which they will be more likely to remain involved in implementing the plan. Put another way, if the plan were developed by one group, with another group given the onus to carry out the plan, it is unlikely that the plan would be implemented effectively. Consider, for instance, a wedding in which the bride was not involved in the wedding planning process. The final wedding day would mean very little to the bride, if she even chooses to participate.

Third, involving members of the community in developing the violence prevention plan fosters collaboration among those various groups that will ultimately be involved in implementing various phases of the plan. Fostering collaboration helps to limit any potential barriers that may arise when different groups work together. Furthermore, allowing the groups to plan collaboratively ensures that the different groups involved in implementing the violence prevention plan can be adequately represented in the strategies developed to address youth violence.

Fourth, and on a related point, empowering members of the community in developing the plan helps to tie together both prevention and intervention ideals. Members of the community who devote much of their efforts to intervention can work with those who promote prevention ideals to make sure that the plan entails all essential elements needed to effectively respond to youth violence.

Finally, soliciting input from members of the public helps to demonstrate how seriously the community is about youth violence prevention. If the planning process occurred devoid of public input, intuitively one might believe that members of the public are not interested in prevention. Given that the planning process described in this report involved the efforts and input of so many different individuals and groups, it is clear that public support for prevention ideals exists. In the following pages, the planning process and subsequent youth violence prevention plan is detailed.

One thing I think the city is doing extremely well is addressing the youth violence situation... If you recall, back in January, city council directed the city manager to tackle the youth violence problem after several shootings toward the end of '05. Since then, a lot has been accomplished in appointing a task force, conducting focus group interviews, creating and conducting a scientific survey of resident opinions throughout the city. In July, two public information meetings will be held to share findings so far and solicit more opinion. A final plan is expected to be presented in August... That's fast work for a project (The Suffolk Initiative on Youth) of such scope and I'd like to praise those involved.

----Andy Prutsok, *Suffolk News Herald*, June 5, 2006, "Stemming Youth Violence."

SECTION 2 RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Working with the risk factors/resource inventory sub-workgroup, attention was given to those risk factors for youth violence that appeared to be particularly salient. In doing so, data were gathered on how these risk factors have changed in recent years in Suffolk as well as how these risk factors compare to other communities and the Commonwealth as a whole. Before discussing these findings, a few general comments about risk factors and protective factors are warranted.

A growing body of scientific research shows factors that place youth at risk of problem behaviors include factors such as drug and alcohol use, teen pregnancy, and violence. At the same time, research is also discovering factors that appear to protect youth at greater risk of engaging in problem behaviors. Discussion of risk and protective factors can be complicated. Sometimes risk and protective factors appear to be simply opposite ends of a single dimension. For example, school dropout is a risk factor for delinquency, while commitment to school appears to protect children from delinquency. However, current theoretical work emphasizes that protective factors are those that reduce risks, that is, commitment to school protects children exposed to one or more risks of problem behavior (the influence of peer pressure). So, in a strict sense, a protective factor might be exposure to a program for at-risk students as defined by low grades or truancy. The following discussion will focus on risk factors because that is how so many factors are measured (e.g., economic disadvantage or school dropout). Occasionally, protective factors—those that promote positive outcomes—will also be discussed (e.g., plans to attend college as a measure of school commitment).

A considerable amount of research focuses on individual level factors that place youth at risk of delinquent activities, and most prevention programs emphasize changing individuals' risk levels through increasing knowledge or changing attitudes. Collecting individual-level data on residents within a community like Suffolk would be very time consuming, very expensive, and perhaps even unethical depending on how the data are used. However, risk and protective factors for individuals exist in various social

environments including the family, the school, and the community. Although there are some problems, as there are with any study, data from these social environments can be collected and analyzed and used to assess what programs and policies are most likely to help reduce crime in Suffolk.

Social and Comparative Contexts

Although data could be simply collected for Suffolk, without some sort of reference point, the data are unlikely to be of much use. For example, learning that census data show that 13% of Suffolk residents live in poverty does not provide much information. What percent of Virginians live in poverty? Has poverty risen or declined in recent years? There are at least two common types of comparisons that can be made to help interpret the data. First, data is sometimes available over time and trend data can tell us if things are getting better or worse and that may help concentrate on factors that appear to be worsening. Second, one can compare Suffolk to other cities, counties, or the state as a whole (or other social units, for that matter). Although data are not often available to do this, combining these two strategies has been shown to be very effective.

For this evaluation, we chose to use trend data when available, and to compare Suffolk to other social units when data were available. Whenever possible, comparisons to the Commonwealth were made to see where Suffolk stands relative to the state.

Furthermore, in terms of the juvenile courts, the city of Suffolk was combined with the city of Franklin and the counties Isle of Wight, and Southampton, into a single district (the 5th district). We decided to use these as geographically close comparative social units. However, because Suffolk is defined as a city and several others are defined as counties, we also made comparisons with Chesapeake, another geographically close city whose populations have increased like Suffolk.

Descriptive data derived from the census (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>) is provided in Table 2. Suffolk is much larger than the city/counties in District 5, more than twice as large as the largest county (Isle of Wight), but much smaller (1/3rd the size) than the neighboring city of Chesapeake. While most of the area experienced considerable

population growth during the 1990s, Suffolk, along with Chesapeake, grew the most, and estimates from 2000 to 2003 suggest that Suffolk continues to grow at higher rates than the other areas. Population density is comparable to Virginia as a whole but is higher than the other counties in District 5 and much sparser than the cities of Franklin and Chesapeake. The racial composition of Virginia is predominantly White (72%) with a substantial proportion being Black (20%); however, the cities and counties vary considerably. Suffolk, Franklin, and Southampton have relatively high concentrations of Blacks compared to the other counties, Chesapeake and Virginia as a whole. Suffolk, Franklin, and Southampton also rank highest in terms of poverty. Homeownership is within 5% of the state as a whole, Southampton, and Chesapeake, but is somewhat lower than the Isle of Wight and considerably higher than in Franklin.

Family Domain

The family is arguably the most important socializing institution, and there are a number of family related risk factors. One clear family related risk factor is abuse and neglect. A recent study of 49 states and the District of Columbia in 2003 conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005) showed that Virginia has relatively low rates of abuse and neglect. In fact, it ranked 4th lowest in the DHHS study. The Virginia Department of Social Services provides data on founded cases of abuse and neglect for cities and counties of Virginia. Figure 2 shows rates of child abuse and neglect for Suffolk, the other counties in the 5th district, Chesapeake, and for Virginia as a whole. Rates of abuse and neglect were lower in Suffolk than any of the other areas and 1% lower than the state average.

Rates of abuse and neglect over time provide another picture of the family domain. Figure 3 shows that rates of abuse and neglect from FY 1999–FY 2003. Virginia overall has seen a reasonably stable decline in the past few years. In Suffolk, although rates have fluctuated slightly, they are basically low, ranging from 1.3 to 2.9 per 1,000 youth aged 0-17. Suffolk's rates are consistently lower than the state rate. Although there may be differences in reporting practices across jurisdictions, these findings are clearly encouraging.

Table 2. Demographic Comparisons of Suffolk, Nearby Cities/Counties and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

	Suffolk	Isle of Wight	South Hampton	Franklin	Chesapeake	Virginia
Population (2003 estimate)	73,515	32,774	17,585	8,594	210,834	7,386,330
Population Change (2000-03)	15.4	10.2	0.6	3.0	5.8	4.3
Population Change (1990-00)	22.1	18.7	2.7	-.5	31.1	14.4
%White	53.8	71.1	56.0	43.6	66.9	72.3
% Black	43.5	27.1	42.9	55.3	28.5	19.6
% Hispanic	1.3	.9	.7	.9	2.0	4.7
% Population Instability	46.6	36.6	36.0	42.5	48.1	47.8
% With High School Degree	76.8	76.2	63.2	71.0	85.1	81.5
% With Bachelor's Degree	17.3	17.5	11.7	16.4	24.7	29.5
% Homeowner	72.2	80.8	74.3	53.7	74.9	68.1
Median HH Income	41,115	45,387	33,995	31,815	50,743	46,677
% Below Poverty	13.2	8.3	14.6	17.3	7.3	9.6
Persons Per Square Mile	159.2	94.1	29.2	999.2	584.6	178.8

Figure 2. Rates of Abuse and Neglect Per 1,000 Youth Aged 0-17 (2003-2004).

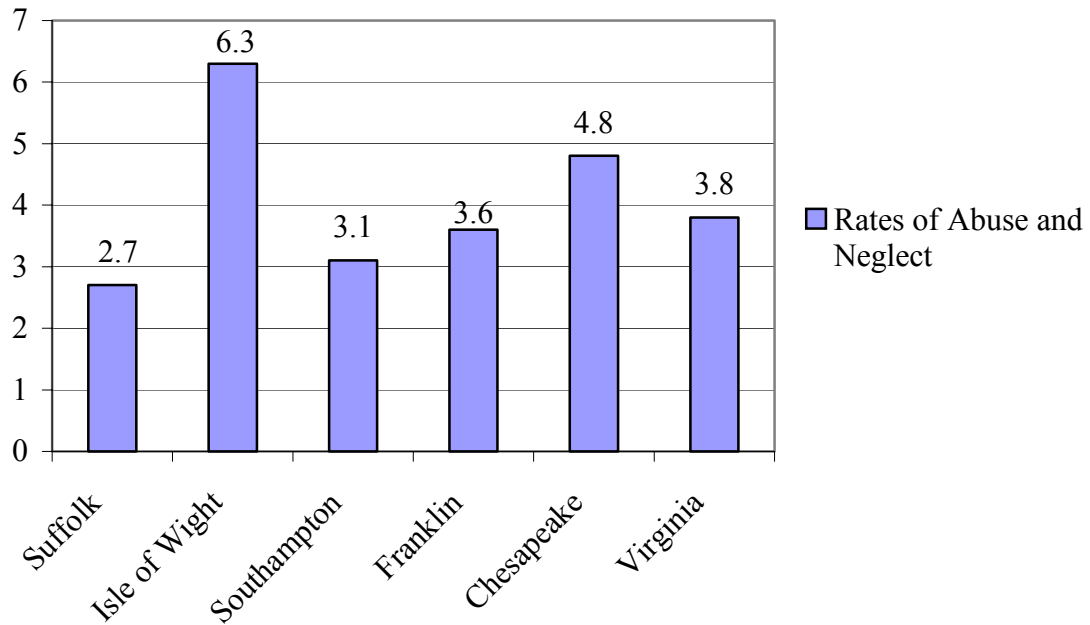
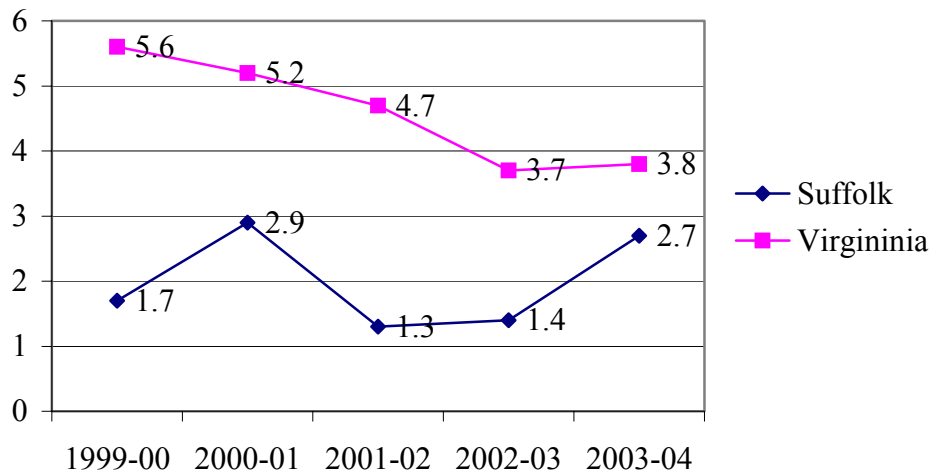


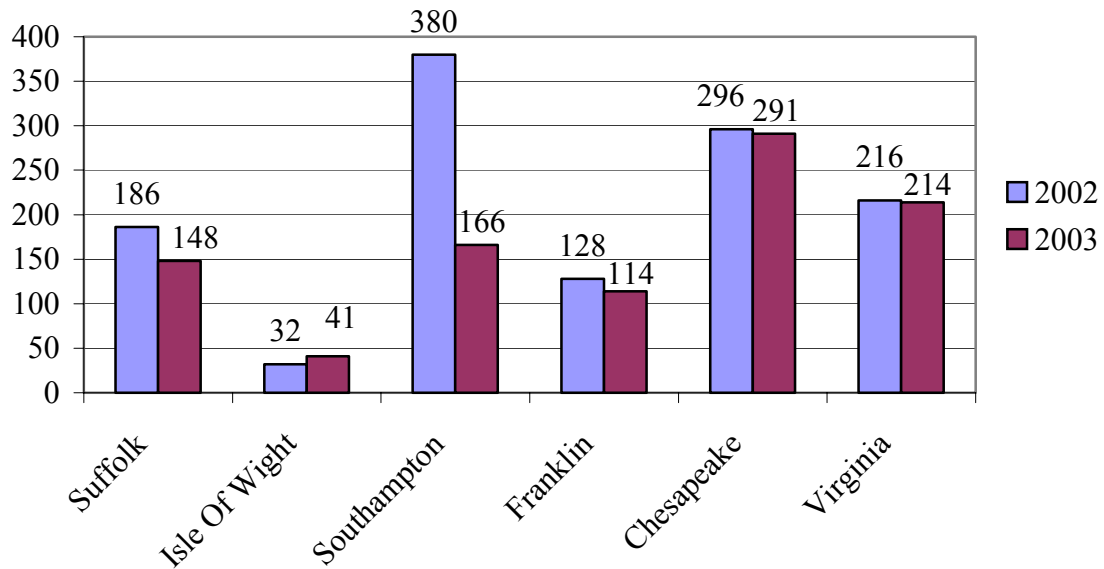
Figure 3. Rates of Abuse and Neglect Per 1,000 Youth Aged 0-17



The Governor’s Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (GOSAP) has developed a Community Profile Data base that included a measure of “family conflict” and “family management problems.” Family conflict is clearly a risk factor for violence and other problem behaviors. Although a more ideal measure might be self-reports of children’s family fights or exposure to domestic violence, such information is not available. At least one indicator is readily available—the arrest rate for domestic violence. Figure 4

shows that Suffolk has lower rates of arrest for domestic violence than the Commonwealth as a whole. Suffolk’s domestic violence arrest rates are also lower than Chesapeake’s and Southampton’s. Alternatively, it is well above the rates in Isle of Wight and Franklin.

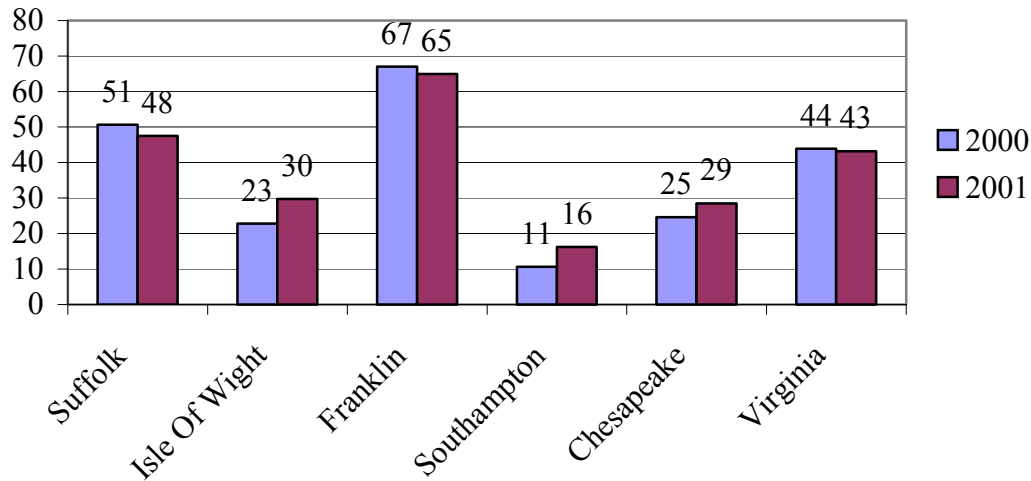
Figure 4. Rates of Arrests for Domestic Violence (2002-2003).



Family management problems are measured by the rate of foster care in the GOSAP data base. Figure 5 shows that Suffolk has slightly higher levels of foster care rates than Virginia as a whole, and substantially higher rates than Isle of Wight, Southampton, and Chesapeake. Only Franklin has higher levels of foster care. Although one could not argue that we would like to see a decline in foster care providers, targeting factors that affect the need for foster care could at least be theoretically argued.

They lack love is what they lack. They are not getting it at home. What they really get at home is dysfunction. What we are talking about is dysfunctional families. Talking about kids that live a dysfunctional lifestyle.
 ----Comments from a service provider at one of the focus groups.

Figure 5. Rates of Foster Care (2000-2001).

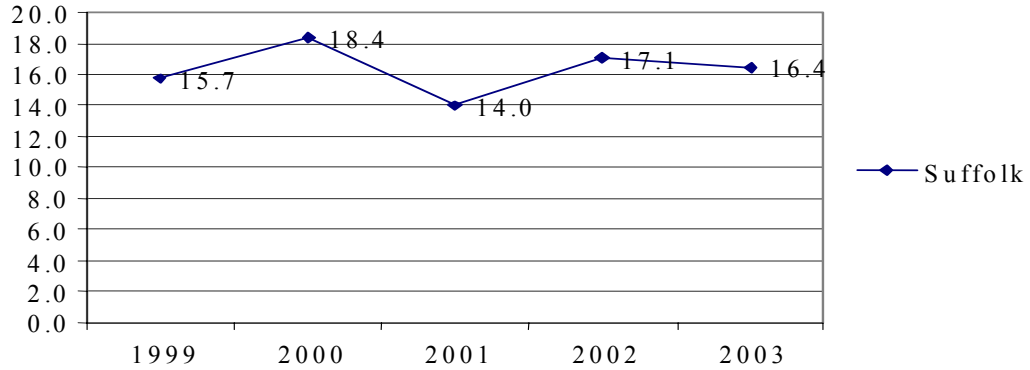


The rate of pregnancies to young women and births to young women can also indicate family management problems. Young women experience numerous difficulties raising children. A website maintained by the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (VDMHMRSAS) provides data concerning numerous risk factors for problem behaviors in the cities and counties of the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, they do not provide data for the Commonwealth as a whole. Throughout this section, when data from the VDMHMRSAS is presented, the “average” at the far right of each figure indicates the average of the other cities and counties in the presented figure. Figure 6 shows that rate of teen pregnancies in Suffolk over time is relatively stable (ranging from 14-18 per 1,000 10-18 year old females in the population).

We need to look at the entire picture to see what is even causing that. You have so many children having children. And if those children having children aren't taught, what are the children coming along going to be taught? We have to look at everything and evaluate everything before you can talk about preventing anything.

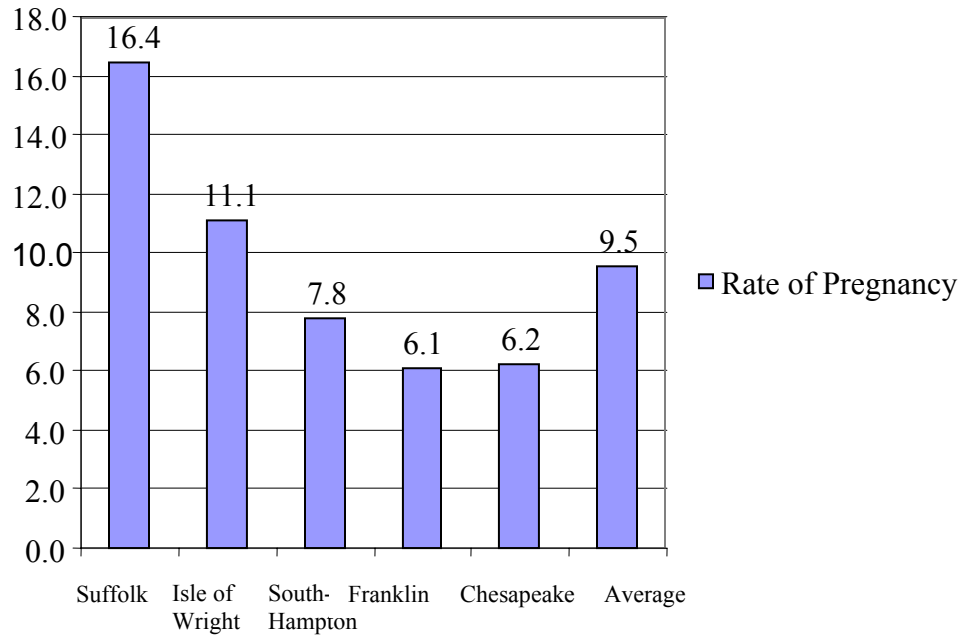
----Comments from a faith-based service leader at one of the focus groups.

Figure 6. Rate of Pregnancies to Adolescent Females Aged 10-17 Per 1,000 Female Adolescents (Suffolk).



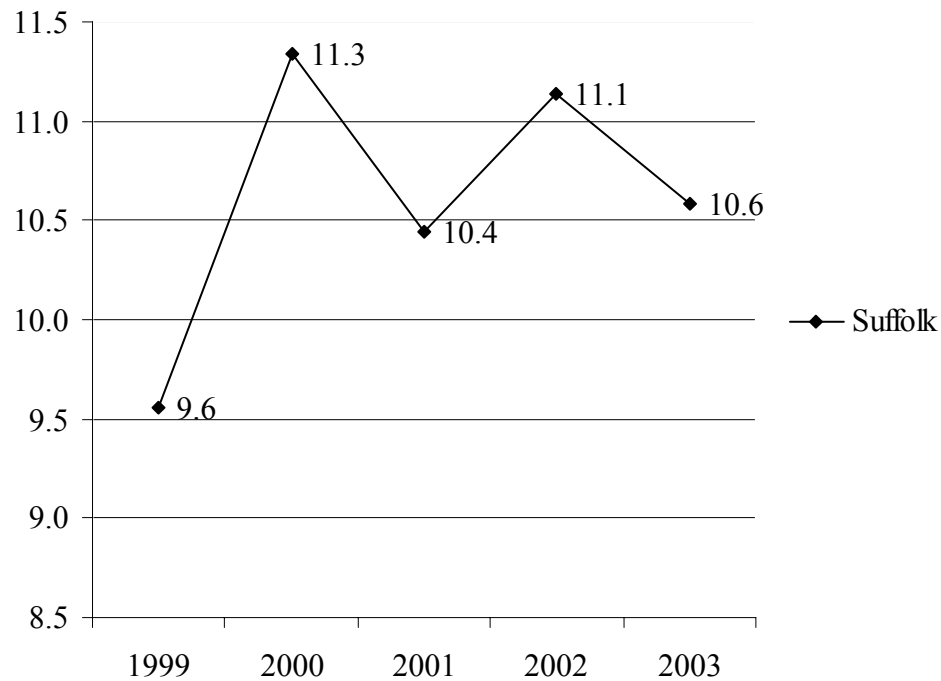
Although stable, Figure 7 shows Suffolk has significantly higher rates of teen pregnancies compared to other cities and counties in the region.

Figure 7. Rate of Pregnancies to Adolescent Females Aged 10-17 Per 1,000 Female Adolescents (2003).



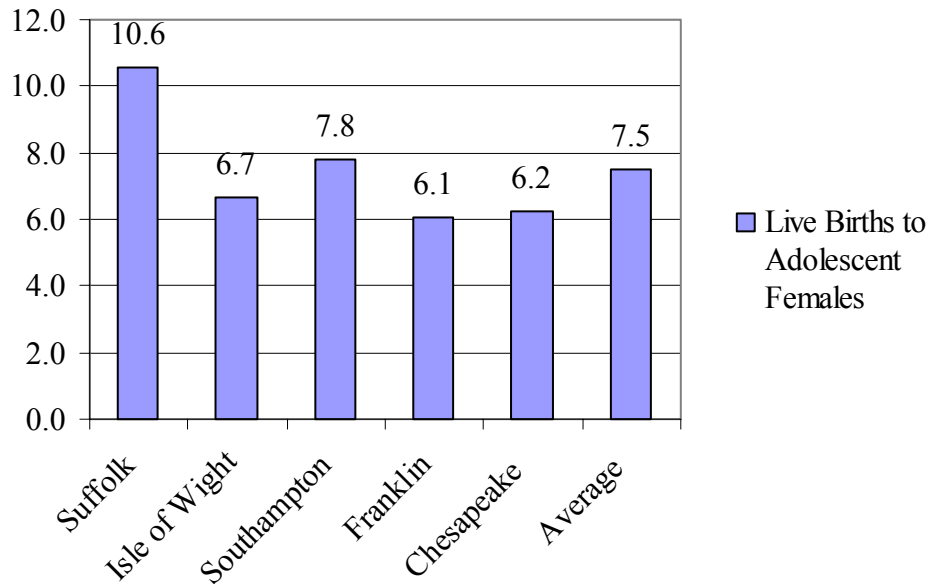
Figures 8 and 9 show rates of births to teen mothers tell a similar story. Suffolk has experienced a minimal increase (about 1%) in rates of births to teen mothers between 1999 and 2003. However, rates are clearly higher than the other cities and counties in the region. Hence, programs that promote knowledge about reproduction, birth control, and family planning, and have been shown to reduce teen pregnancy and births should be considered.

Figures 8. Rate of Live Births to Adolescent Females Aged 10-17 Per 1,000 Female Adolescents (Suffolk).



The break down of the family and poverty are the root of this. It's a whole lot deeper than what we see. We need to find the real cause. Youth violence is just the surface. When we find the real cause—lack of God, lack of hope, lack of family, lack of resources, then we can begin to get answers.
----Comments from a service provider at one of the focus group interviews.

Figure 9. Rate of Live Births to Adolescent Females Aged 10-17 Per 1,000 Female Adolescents (2003).



School Domain

Other than the family, the school is perhaps the largest institution regulating the lives of America's youth. Attachment and commitment to school have been shown to be proven protective factors promoting human and social capital and reducing the risk of juvenile delinquency. Schools also generate risk factors by providing opportunities to deviate. That is, schools have rules and "rules are made to be broken." Furthermore, schools bring together youth from different neighborhoods and "different walks of life" potentially leading to conflicts or simply bringing together like-minded (e.g., delinquency prone) youth who encourage one another. Schools also collect a considerable amount of data that can be used to assess risk factors and actual levels of delinquency in the school environment. Data for this report were provided by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). In particular, the VDOE provided data for the following measures:

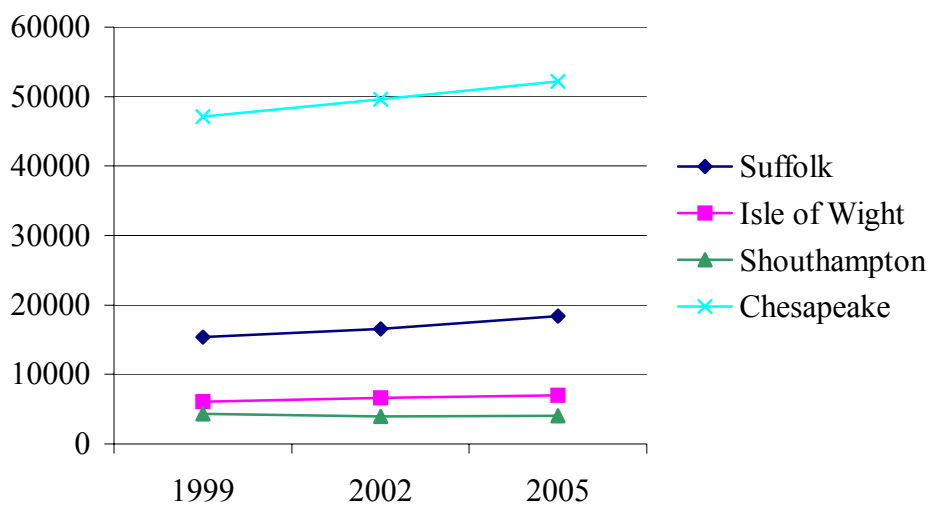
- Population growth
- Percent eligible for free or reduced priced lunches
- Academic performance
- School dropouts
- Disciplinary reports.

Growth in Student Population

Student population growth can create disorder and increase levels of delinquency, especially if resources are not accompanied with the growth. Overall, Virginia saw a 6% increase in student population growth between 1999 and 2005. However, growth was not distributed randomly. Although Chesapeake has the largest number of students, their increase in student population from 1999 to 2005 was only 11%. Suffolk by far saw the largest percentage increase (20%) followed by Isle of Wight (15%). Southampton actually showed a slight decline (-6%).

Figure 10 shows student population growth. We were able to find some information on teacher-student ratio through the Yearly Superintendent Reports located on the VDOE website. The data suggested that Suffolk was on par with the state for most age groups; however, there were caveats that precluded clear interpretations. More thought on Suffolk's ability to handle the large number of added students should be considered. Changes in population levels can result in higher levels of delinquency or disorder in situations, especially when resources are not increased proportionately to the population growth.

Figure 10. Student Population Growth.

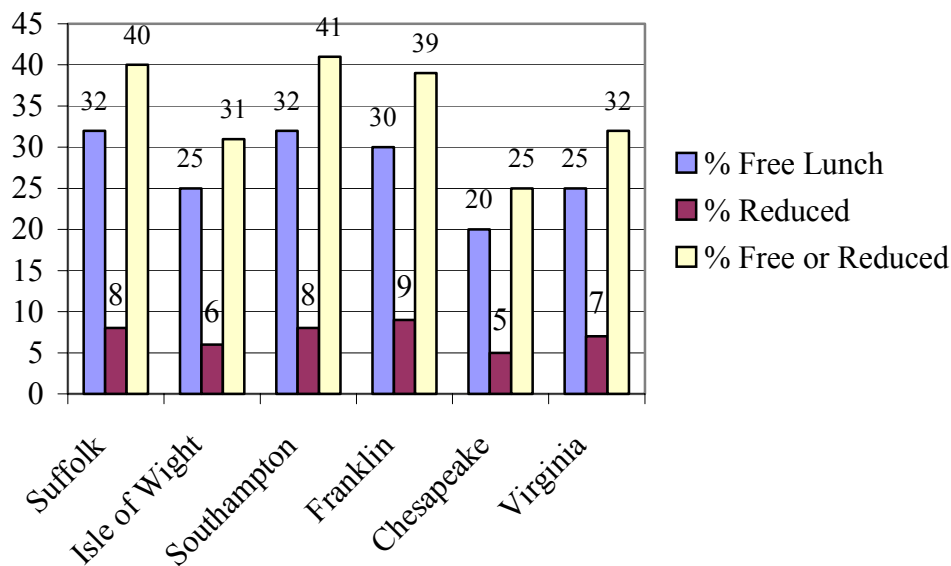


Percent Eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Lunches

Extreme economic disadvantage is a clear risk factor for juvenile delinquency and youth violence. One indicator of economic disadvantage in the schools is the percent eligible for free or reduced priced lunches. Of course, programs that provide free or reduced priced lunch are attempts to provide a protective factor that hopefully works to bond youth to the social institution.

Figure 11 shows the percent eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. Suffolk along with Southampton and Franklin (all around 40%) have high levels of disadvantage compared with the state (32%) and the other counties in the 5th district and Chesapeake (ranging from 25 to 32%). Programs that help to ameliorate the risk associated with economic disadvantage, like the free/reduced lunch program, should be encouraged. Trend data for the past three years show very stable rates of eligibility for free lunch for the state and Suffolk, with Suffolk having approximately 6% higher rates of eligibility than the state as a whole.

Figure 11. Percent Eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch.



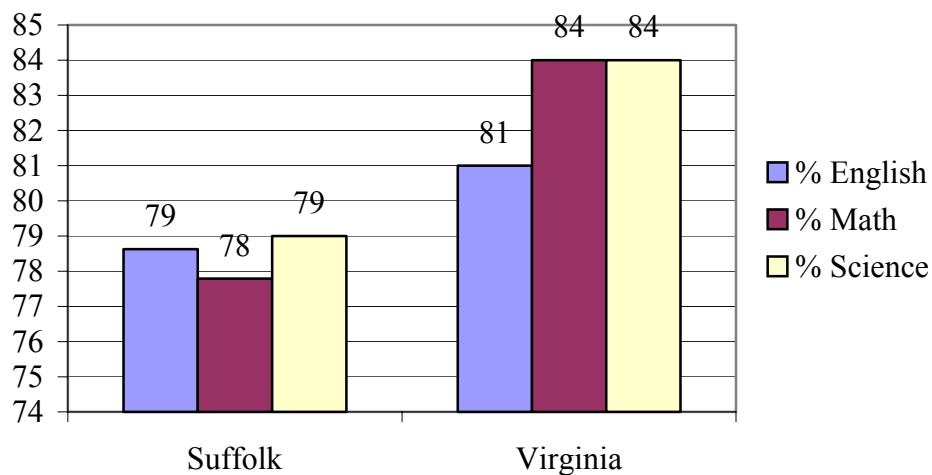
Academic Performance

Academic performance is an indicator of commitment to school and a protective factor reducing the risk of delinquency. The VDOE (<http://pen2.vak12ed.edu/>) states:

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to set annual objectives for achievement in reading and mathematics. Schools, school divisions, and states that meet or exceed these goals are deemed to have met the federal law's definition of Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP. This report includes data on the achievement of students on all state standardized tests, including SOL tests, substitute assessments approved by the Board of Education, and tests taken by students with disabilities and students of limited English proficiency

Figure 12 compares Suffolk with the Commonwealth. Although the pass rate is lower in Suffolk compared to the state (ranging from 2 to 6% lower), the measurable objective for the state is 65% for English and 63% for Math. Consequently, Suffolk still made the AYP.

Figure 12. Percent Passing AYP.



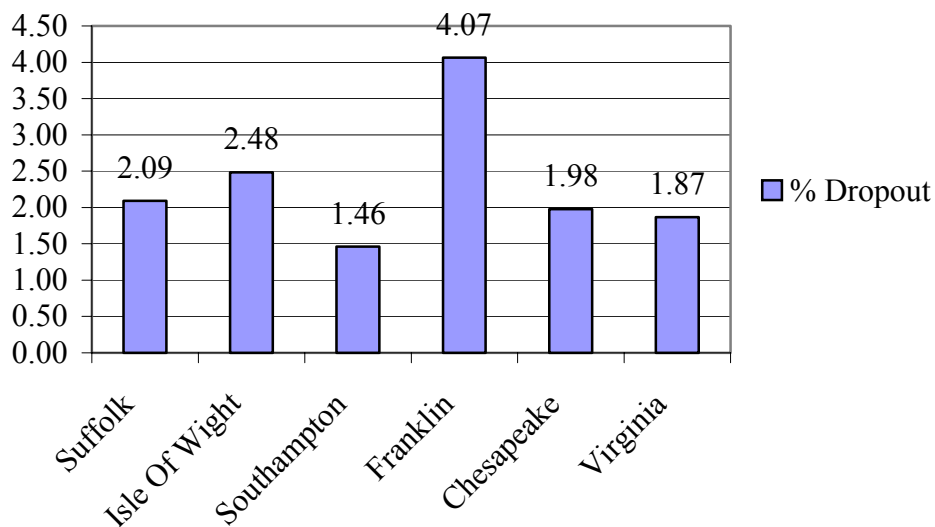
School Dropout and Truancy

Research clearly shows that dropping out of school is an individual level risk factor predicting juvenile delinquency and other problem behaviors in the community.

Research shows that Virginia has quite low rates of dropout compared to other states in the country. In fact, a recent report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2004) shows that in the school years 1999-00 and 2000-01 school years Virginia ranked 8th and 10th respectively, lowest in school dropouts across states.

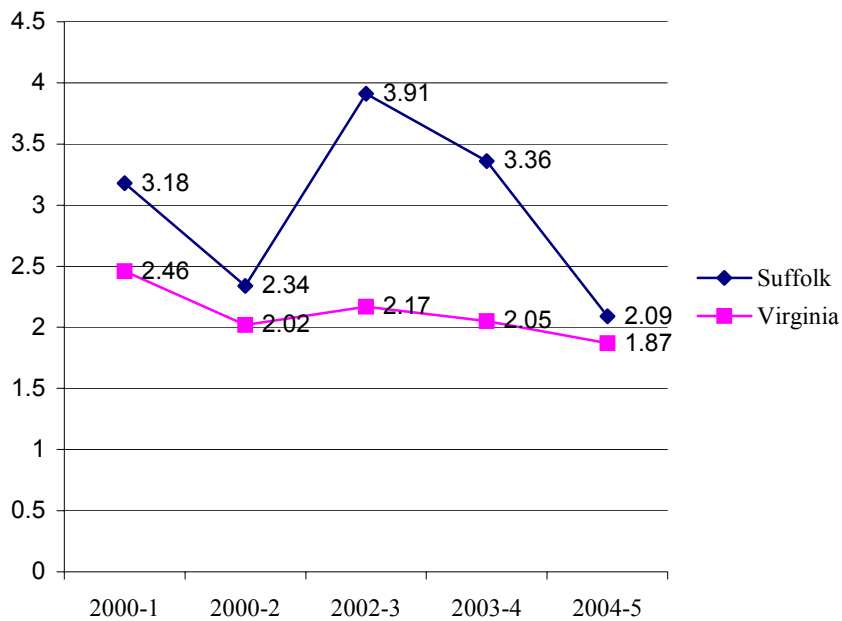
The VDOE data for 2004-05 show relatively low rates of dropout across the 132 school divisions in Virginia, but clear variation ranging from .0% in seven districts to 5.6 and 5.63 in Lynchburg and Buchanan. Suffolk ranks higher than 75% of the other districts. This sounds disturbing but there are other ways of looking at the data. Figure 13 shows how Suffolk's dropout rates compare to other local areas and the state. Suffolk is within only 1% of the state average and most of the other local communities, and the dropout rate is approximately 2% lower than Franklin's.

Figure 13. Percent Dropout Grades 7-12 by City.



Another way to think about dropout in Suffolk is in terms of change. Figure 14 shows changing rates of drop out in Suffolk and the Commonwealth from school years 2000-01 to 2004-05. Although Suffolk experienced a slight upturn in 2002-03, the trend has reversed itself and is now about 1% lower than in 2000-01 and quite close to the state average. We conclude that Suffolk has average rates of drop out in the state, but relatively low rates in comparison to other areas of the country. Suffolk schools, however, should continue to monitor dropout and do what it can to prevent it.

Figure 14. Percent Dropout Grades 7-12, 2000-2005.



We ask kids if they want to go to college. 99% of kids want to go to college. It's unbelievable. Once we get them to buy into what they want to accomplish, we make them realize what it's going to take to reach their goals. We say, okay, you need to research and find out what it takes. They know what path they have to take and they know the road they will follow to get there.

----Comments of a service provider from one of the focus groups.

Like school dropout, truancy is a particularly important risk factor for delinquency, drug use, and violence. Unfortunately, the school data pertaining to truancy appears inconsistent across cities and counties of Virginia and even within school districts overtime. The numbers vary so dramatically that they must represent differences across districts in reporting practices as well as differences in reporting practices within districts over time. The VDOE report states that the numbers represent the number of students whom a conference was scheduled after the student had accumulated six absences during the school year.

However, the *number of students whom a conference was scheduled* could be interpreted or misinterpreted in one of the following ways (and even combinations of the following ways) with dramatically different results:

- The incidence of students having more than six absences (a single student could have several bouts of six unexcused absences)
- The number of students with six or more absences
- The number of students with six or more absences where a conference is actually scheduled
- The number of students with six or more absences where a conference is scheduled and a meeting actually takes place
- The number of students with six or more absences where a conference is scheduled, a meeting actually takes place, and a report is filed.

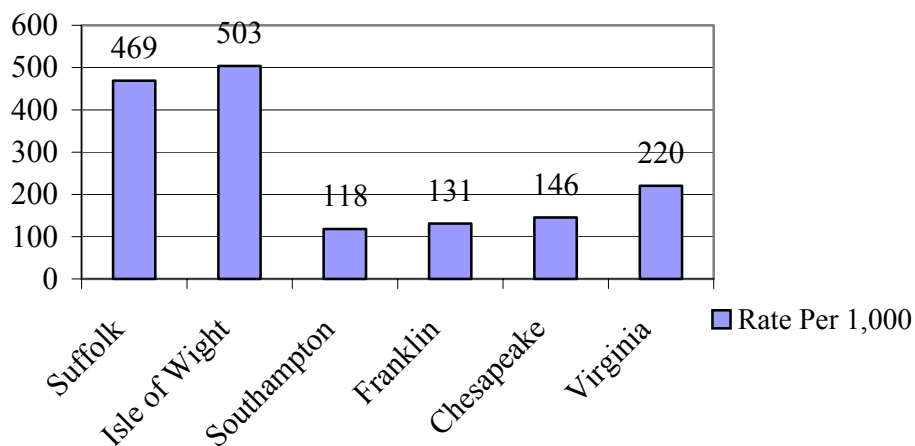
Suffolk's numbers grew from 842 in FY02-03 to 4,924 in FY03-04 to 5,809 in FY04-05. The later two numbers are the highest in the commonwealth, even though Suffolk is a relatively small city in terms of student population. However, the data suggest that even if Suffolk uses the most liberal definition (i.e., counting some cases more than once and using only the number of absences regardless of meeting to make the report), truancy appears to be problematic in Suffolk. Incidentally, we had these numbers double checked by the Suffolk school administration and they confirmed the high levels of unexcused absences and suggested that other districts are under-reporting their respective levels of truancy.

Disciplinary Reports

Disciplinary reports provided by the VDOE include 26 categories, some of which can be thought of as both risk factors and violent outcomes and others as potential risk factors. Fighting, battery against teachers or other students, malicious wounding, homicide, and robbery, for example, are violent outcomes at the school or district level. However, they can also be viewed as contextual factors that increase some individuals' proclivity by providing an environment or subculture conducive to violence. Other disciplinary reports--such as possession of drugs and/or alcohol, disorderly conduct, "gang activity," and possession of firearms--are more likely to be viewed as risk factors for violent activity. It is important to remember that disciplinary reports, like virtually all data collected, is both a reflection of student misbehavior and the reporting behaviors of school staff. Both activities likely vary within schools and across schools and districts, and both have a tremendous effect on the quality of data given the question(s) at hand. In fact, the online reports by the VDOE provide explicit warnings concerning comparing disciplinary action reports overtime or across divisions. Caution is warranted therefore in interpreting the following analyses.

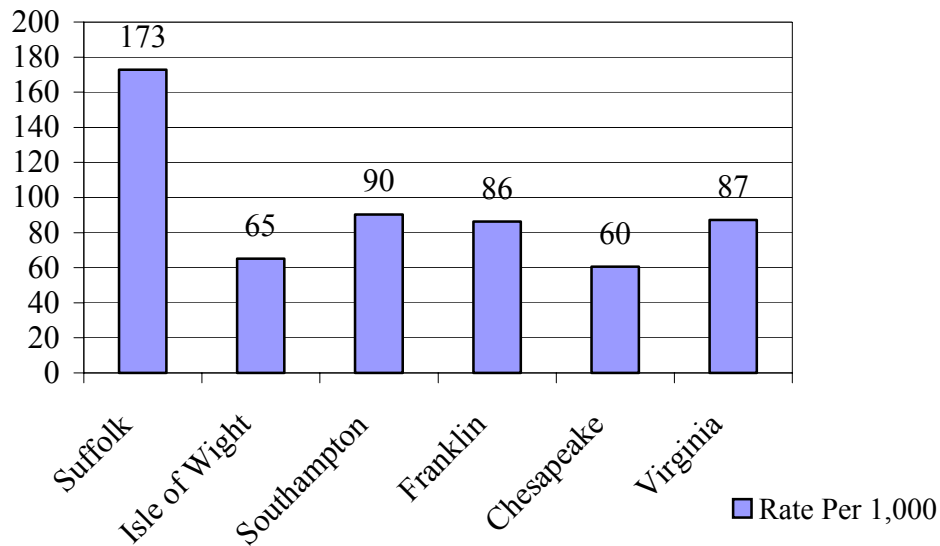
Figure 15 describes rates of total disciplinary reports for Suffolk and other local communities and for Virginia as a whole for the school year 2003-04. Excluding the Isle of Wight, Suffolk had the highest rate of total reported disciplinary actions, more than twice the rate as the state as whole and even higher than the other counties.

Figure 15. Total Disciplinary Reports Rate Per 1,000 5th-12th Graders.



Such high rates warrant further attention. We next sorted the categories within each of the communities by the number of reports. With the exception of Southampton where disorderly conduct was ranked second and fighting without injuries was ranked first, disorderly conduct was ranked number one in each of the city/counties. However, disorderly conduct was higher in Suffolk than all of the other city/counties including Chesapeake, which has over three times as many students. The VDOE uses disorderly conduct as an example of a particularly difficult, “catch-all,” category where district comparisons might prove difficult because of differences between staff members and districts in how the behavior is conceptualized and their willingness and ability to report it. They note that some divisions have a single subcategory while others have up to seven subcategories. We recalculated the total number of reports and the related rates, which are presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Rate of Disciplinary Reports (Excluding Disorderly Conduct) by City.



Given that disorderly conduct was so common, it is not surprising that the rates are so much lower; however, it is still clear that Suffolk has much higher rates of reporting disciplinary actions than other city/counties, and the rate is approximately twice as high as the state average. There are other reasons for concern. The second most common disciplinary report in Suffolk (as in most of the jurisdictions) was fighting without injuries. There were more cases in Suffolk ($n=579$) than in Chesapeake ($n=415$) and the

next most common report was for battery against a student ($n=177$), again higher than in Chesapeake (a city three times the size of Suffolk). There were 26 reports of gang activity in all of Virginia. Six of the reports of gang activity were in Suffolk (23% of the entire state reports) and one was in Chesapeake. None of the other counties of the fifth district reported gang activity in the school disciplinary reports.

Granted there are differences in peoples' willingness and ability to report school violations, and differences in reporting procedures could bring about these striking dissimilarities. Suffolk may, in fact, be providing excellent reporting to the VDOE while other areas may be more tolerant and subsequently less likely to report. Or, some schools may be less likely to report misbehavior simply because they want their schools to look safer. The data, however, clearly should bring about a certain measure of concern, and suggest that school-based programs that reduce risk factors and promote protective factors should be considered.

Taken together, the data collected show both positive aspects of Suffolk as well as areas of concern. Low rates of abuse, neglect, and arrests for domestic violence are encouraging signs for the family domain. However, high rates of teen pregnancies and teen births show reason for concern. Problems in the family can be exacerbated by problems in the community. Evidence of large population growth and social and economic disadvantage in both the school reports and in census data warrants concern. Finally, the high rates of school disciplinary reports suggest that the schools may be an important domain to target programs—especially those that directly target violence and gang activity. The former problem (violence) is clearly evidenced, even when taking into account data problems potentially resulting from non-reporting. The second issue, the prevalence of gangs, is more complicated. Although gangs and gang members have been identified by the police and the public (to be discussed later), it is not clear that most of the violent activity seen in the schools is the result of gang activity. Research clearly suggests that targeting gangs before they become endemic to the area is crucial.

**SECTION 3
JUVENILE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE POLICE
AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The data records workgroup was instrumental in providing various forms of data to generate a better understanding about juvenile involvement with the police and the juvenile justice system. The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice provided considerable data on juveniles who come before the courts through intakes and what happens to youth as they proceed through the system. Their data make up the bulk of this next section; however, the data is supplemented with other data sources (e.g., Suffolk police and the Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission) and well as reports from the 5th District Juvenile Conference Committee and external evaluations.

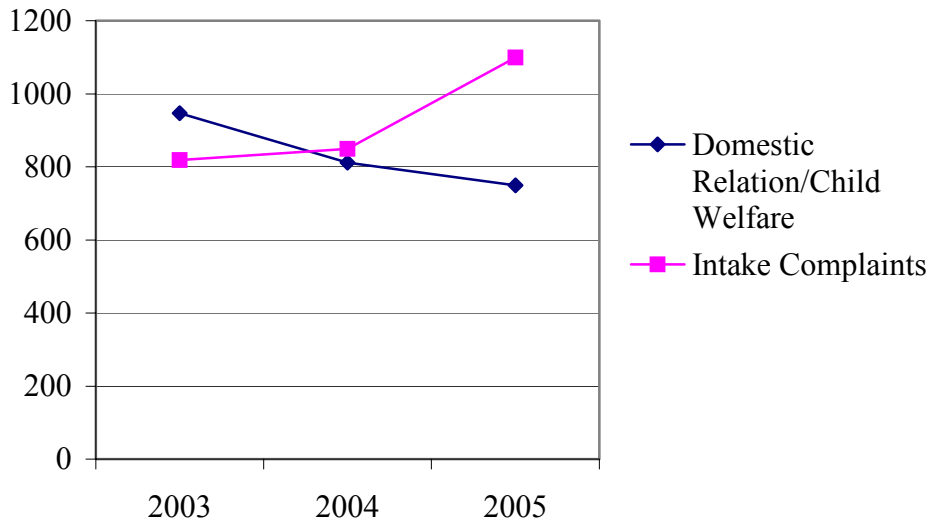
Figure 17 shows clearly that the number of Juvenile intake complaints rose steadily and substantially (34%) from 2003 to 2005 (818, 849, and 1,099, respectively). Felony intake complaints were much less stable dropping from 281 to 201 from 2003 to 2004, increasing again to 271 in 2005. Overall, the Commonwealth experienced a relatively stable level of juvenile intake complaints (there were 90,137 intake complaints in 2003, 91,778 in 2004, and 90,709 in 2005).

Figure 17 provides a more positive note regarding the number of domestic relations/child welfare cases in Suffolk, which include custody issues, desertion/support, and spousal abuse. Reports of these cases decreased between 2003 and 2005 (-21%) and declined at an even steeper rate than that of the Commonwealth as a whole (-6%).

You got to have options for the youth. If you don't have something for them, they will find something to do, whether it's negative or positive. In Washington D.C., the school system has the partnership program. They had a schedule of when the gyms were open. You've got to have different types of programs, they have to be structured, and you've got to have supervision, that way they can be held accountable. And then there are programs that are just recreation. Some kids are leery or are afraid of participation in educational programs. Just going to watch ball, or just watching a movie. You have to have a wide range of activities to attract a wide range of kids that like different things. Not everybody likes educational things.

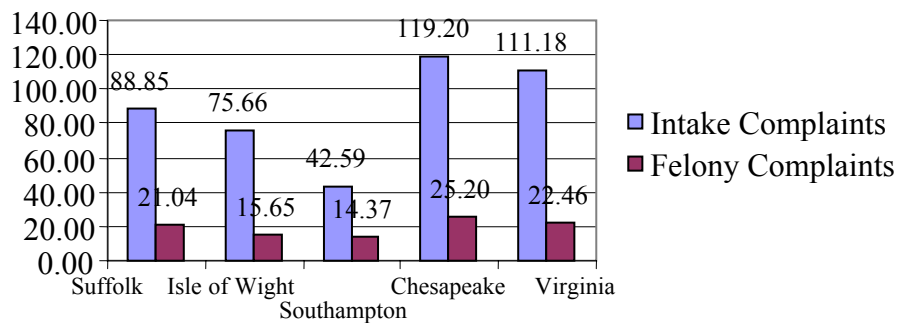
---Comments of a service provider during one of the focus groups.

Figure 17. Intake and Domestic Relations/Child Welfare Complaints.



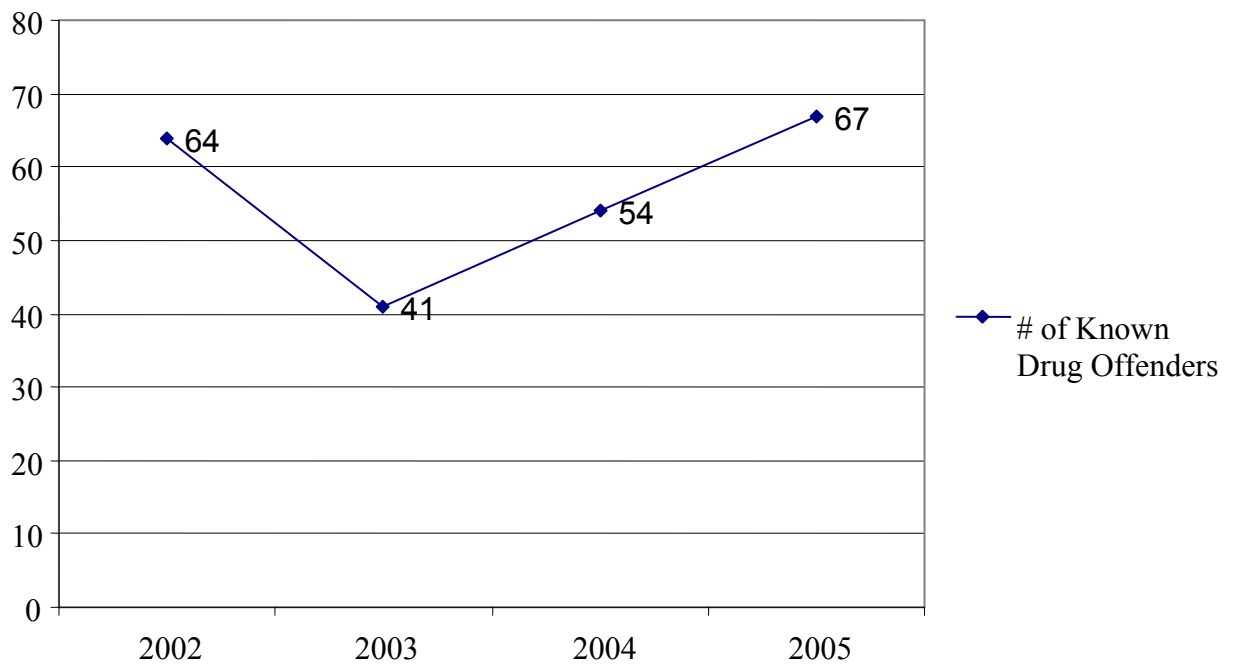
To make estimates comparable to the Commonwealth, rates of juvenile intake (per 1,000 youths age 10-17) were computed for 2004, the most recent year that juvenile population data was available. Data presented in Figure 18 show that Suffolk has substantially lower rates of juvenile intake complaints than the neighboring city of Chesapeake and than the Commonwealth as a whole. However, it has appreciably higher rates than the other counties in the 5th District where data were available. In terms of the more serious felony intake complaints, Suffolk had lower rates than Chesapeake, quite similar rates as the Commonwealth overall, but still higher rates than the other counties in the 5th District.

Figure 18. Rate of Juvenile Intake Complaints (2004).



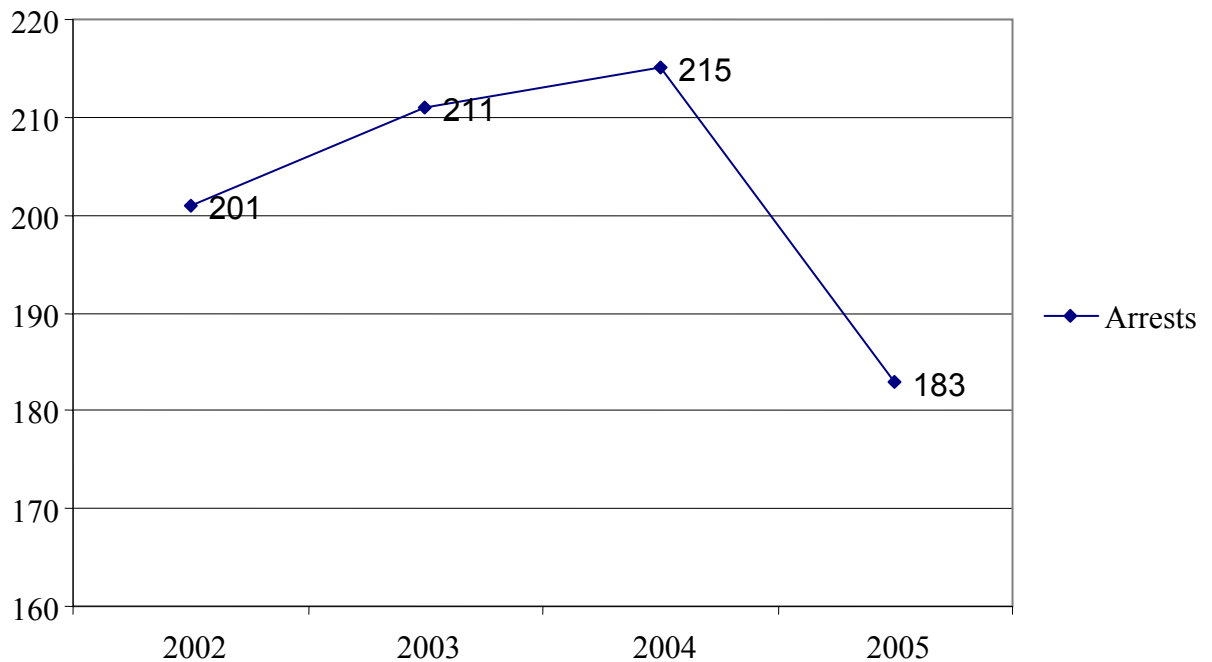
Intakes are an important indicator of juvenile misbehavior and reactions by the community and the courts. Police data are also useful for understanding juvenile contact with the justice system. The Suffolk police provided trend data on known drug offenders (identified as drug offenders, not necessarily arrests), and arrests for property crimes, disorderly conduct/vandalism, and curfew violations. The latter is particularly interesting because the Suffolk police recently stepped up the enforcement of curfew violations. Figure 19 shows trends in known drug offenders. These include all types of narcotics (e.g., marijuana, cocaine, heroin) and different types of offenders (e.g., possession, delivery). The current figures are just higher than they were in 2002; however, there is clear linear increase from 2003 to 2005. Note also that the numbers are not terribly large and suggest that this group may be targeted not only by the police, but programs that deal with juvenile substance use outside the criminal justice system. The Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission, for example, has a special program for Juvenile Substance Abuse.

Figure 19. Trends in Known Drug Offenders.



Arrest for property crimes, shown in Figure 20, show steady escalation between 2002 and 2004 and then a precipitous drop. The drop might be explained by changing youth behavior or law enforcement efforts in other areas. The latter is more likely a concern over violence as gangs emerged in 2005.

Figure 20. Number of Arrests for Property Crimes.

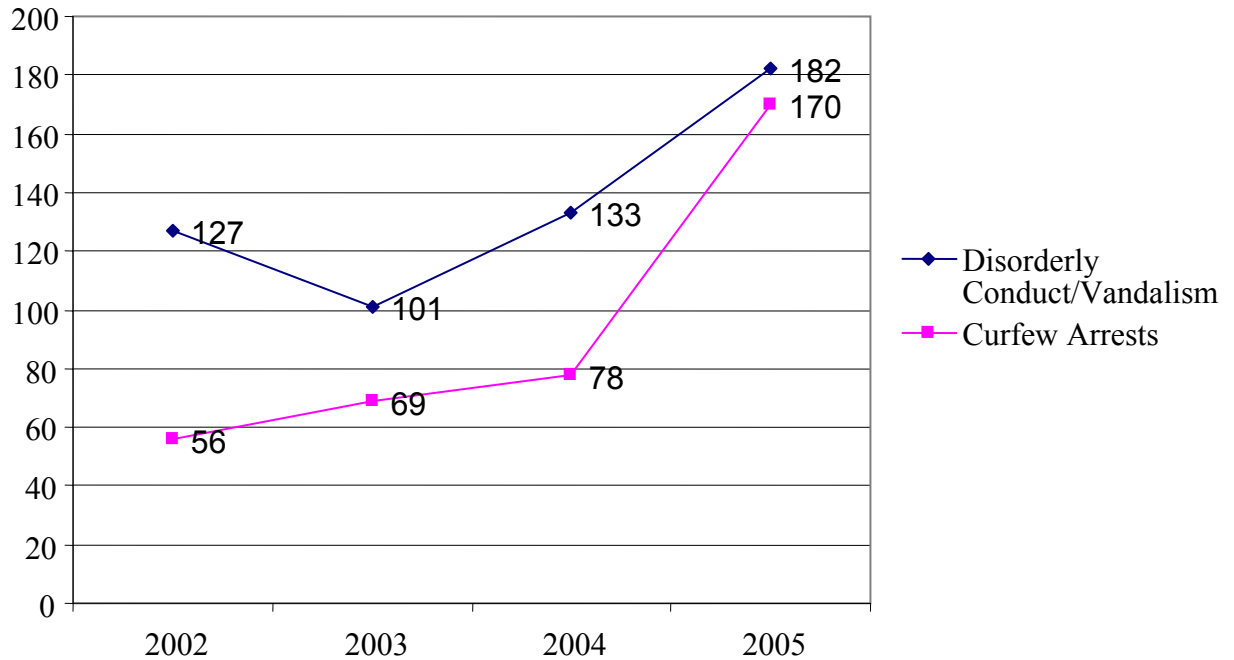


Both the number of disorderly conduct/vandalism and curfew violation arrests are presented in Figure 21. As shown in the figure, the numbers are similar and the trends are in the same direction. Both trends suggest greater enforcement of these two more common, less serious violations in an attempt to prevent the more serious and violent crimes before they occur.

I believe there is a combination of factors contributing. When you speak to the aspect of violence, it really starts with bullying, name calling and all of that builds up to fighting, gangs, guns, murder and so forth. We need to get it on the low level when children are having conflicts that they are unable to resolve—like bullying one another that lead to verbal and even physical altercations. Hopefully, we can extinguish the higher levels of violence that exist in Suffolk.

----Comments of a parent at one of the focus groups.

Figure 21. Number of Arrests for Disorderly Conduct/Vandalism and Curfew.



Stepping up the enforcement of minor violations is one strategy shown to be effective in some communities. Alternatively, overzealous strategies and enforcement can promote negative police-community relations. Lawrence Sherman, the lead author of *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, has argued that police activities that appear unfair can garner negative, defiant reactions when experienced or even observed. We discussed what happens to youth arrested for curfew violations with the police and Bill Harrell, director of the Fifth District Court Services Unit. Most agreed that diversionary tactics (usually referral to the Juvenile Conference Committee (JCC)) are in order, especially for first-time offenders and some sort of restorative measures are taken (e.g., community service, an essay, or evidence of acceptable school performance). Occasionally, officers will insist that the case go to court where the judge may (a) encourage the use of diversion through the JCC or (b) apply any number of more serious consequences. The latter, especially if it is not predictable (some juveniles receive lenient while others receive more harsh sentences), may indeed lead to perceptions of an unjust system and negative reactions to law enforcement.

Returning to the data provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice, the data show that the 1,099 juvenile intake complaints in 2005 represent a total of 763 cases (several

complaints could be made concerning the same case). Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of those cases compared with cases in the other three localities in District 5, as well as in Chesapeake and for the Commonwealth as a whole.

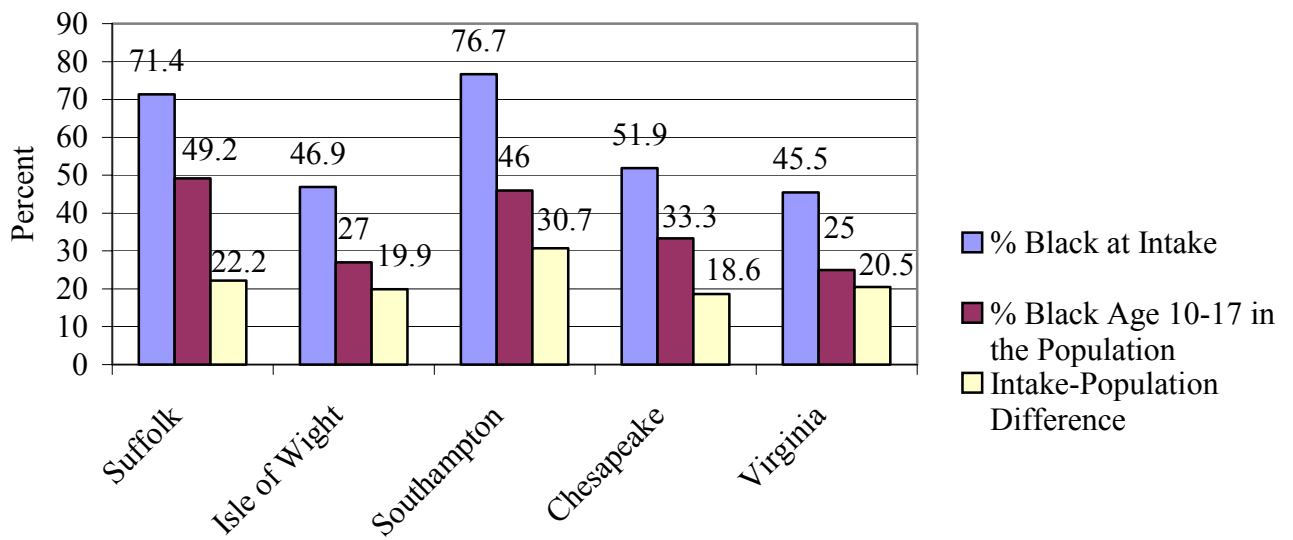
Although most of the data reported below is, for the most part, consistent with the research literature, there are a number of interesting features. Across cities and counties, juvenile intake cases are far more likely to involve males than females. This is true of Suffolk which has a slightly higher percentage of male intakes than the state average. Still, females make up a substantial proportion of cases. Unfortunately, data on gender differences in the type of offense or offense severity is not available. The age distribution of these cases is also not terribly surprising. Juveniles' propensity to engage in delinquent acts that come to the attention of the juvenile justice system tends to increase into the teen years. After 17 years of age, young adults are generally dealt with in the adult criminal justice system. The age distribution varies slightly across jurisdictions but nothing is terribly striking in these differences. Juveniles are most likely to be around 16 or 17 at intake, although a substantial proportion is younger.

Perhaps the most interesting feature in the table is the racial distribution of the intake cases. Blacks are more common among intakes than Whites in Suffolk, across jurisdictions of District 5, and in Chesapeake. Whites are slightly more represented for the Commonwealth as a whole. Of course, much of this disparity might be explained by the racial composition of the cities. However, data presented in the earlier table shows that the overall racial composition of Suffolk, the other city/counties in District 5, Chesapeake, and Virginia as a whole is predominately White. To explore this further, we calculated the percent Black of each population age 10-17. The results are provided in Figure 22 below.

Table 3. Demographics of Juvenile Intake Cases (2005).

	Suffolk	Isle of Wight	South Hampton	Franklin	Chesapeake	Virginia
Race						
% Black	71.4	46.9	76.7	84.6	51.9	45.5
% White	27.1	50.7	23.0	13.5	44.3	47.0
% Hispanic	.5	.5	.0	.0	1.6	4.8
% Other	.9	1.9	.0	1.9	2.2	2.6
Sex						
% Male	73.4	76.8	93.0	80.8	69.8	68.9
% Female	26.6	23.2	7.0	19.2	30.2	31.1
Age						
% 8-12	7.5	4.8	2.3	.0	7.4	6.8
% 13	8.5	7.7	11.6	13.5	8.1	8.4
% 14	13.9	11.6	7.0	3.8	11.7	13.9
% 15	19.4	21.7	23.3	13.5	16.9	19.6
% 16	23.5	22.7	34.9	38.5	24.5	23.3
% 17	23.5	29.0	18.6	26.0	26.8	24.6
% 18-20	2.8	2.4	2.3	3.8	3.7	2.7
% Error/Missing	1.0	.0	.0	.0	.9	.8
Total Cases	763	207	43	52	2,370	65,107

Figure 22. Racial Difference in the Population and at Intake.



In every jurisdiction, Black youth are overrepresented. The size of the disparity does not vary greatly with the exception of Southampton which has a 31% difference. The disparity in Suffolk is just slightly higher than for the Commonwealth as a whole (both just over 20%). Finding that minority youth, in this case Black youth, are overrepresented at intake is consistent with other research in Virginia (McCarter, 1997) and in other jurisdictions (Kempf, Pope, Feyerherm, 1995; Engen, Steen, and Bridges, 2002).

Such a finding is concerning in and of itself, but interpreting the finding is much more difficult. A considerable volume of research has been conducted to determine the extent to which the overrepresentation is due to differential involvement in delinquent activities or to differential treatment by the criminal justice system and other social service agencies (see Engen et al., 2002). To further address this issue would require rigorous analyses of individual level data and is beyond the scope of this report. However, we would encourage Suffolk to take such disparity seriously and consider how sub-cultural and cultural barriers contributing to disparities can be reduced.

There are a wide range of intake complaints and the DJJ data lists 30 categories. In Suffolk in 2005, offenses ranged from very minor offenses such as abusive language/obscenity (1.0%) to serious property crimes such as burglary (4.1%) and very serious personal crimes such as robbery (1.0%). The two most common distinct offenses in 2005 were larceny (13.6%) and assault (20.0%). No other category had more than 7% except for the amorphous miscellaneous/other category (13.3%). The DJJ ranks actual intakes into severity levels.

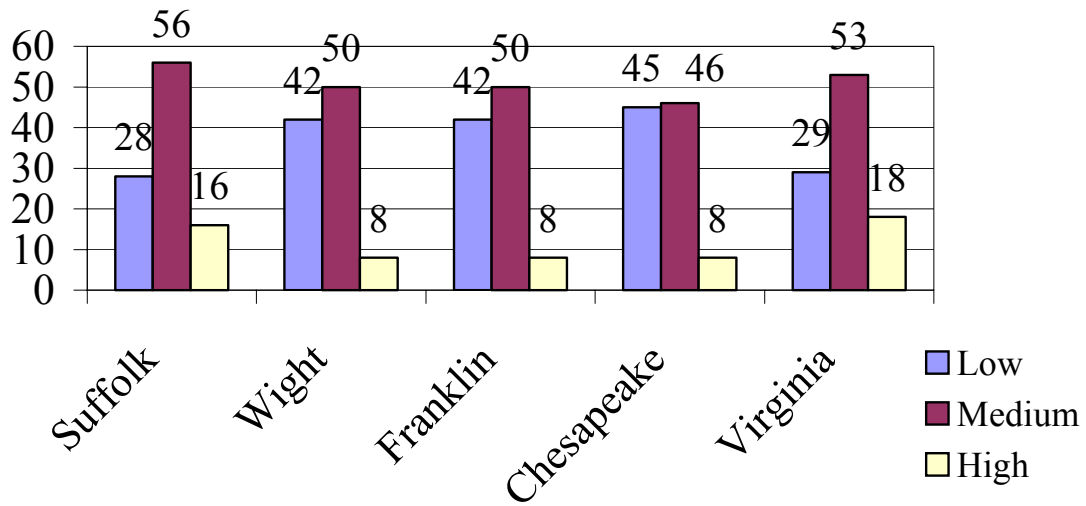
Table 4 presents these data across jurisdictions. In comparison to other crimes, felony crimes against persons were relatively rare in Suffolk and just slightly higher than neighboring Chesapeake and the state as a whole. Combining felony and misdemeanor crimes against persons brings the percentage for Suffolk up to 20% of intakes, which is just lower than Chesapeake (23%) and the State (22%). The percentage is higher than Southampton (12%) and much lower than the Isle of Wight (36%) and Franklin (42%). Intake for felony narcotic offenses is rare across social contexts, but many narcotic offenses are likely to fall under the Class 2 misdemeanor category of “other,” which is the largest category across groups. Status offenses are also fairly common in Suffolk (15%), slightly lower than the state (17%) and Chesapeake (19%), but higher than the other localities in District 5.

Evaluations are conducted on some juveniles to assess their risk of reoffending. In 2005, risk assessments were conducted on 149 juveniles in Suffolk, 62 in Isle on Wight, 10 in Southampton, 24 in Franklin, 409 in Chesapeake, and 10,604 across all jurisdictions in the Commonwealth. Given the very small number of evaluations conducted in Southampton, we excluded it from further analysis. Risk assessment information is presented in Figure 23. As shown in the figure, the proportion of Suffolk offenders at high risk of reoffending is just 2% less than for the state, but is twice as high as the other localities in District 5 and in Chesapeake. Overall, risk of offending in Suffolk appears quite similar to the state average.

Table 4. Offense Severity at Intake (2005).

	Suffolk	Isle of Wight	South Hampton	Franklin	Chesapeake	Virginia
Felony						
% Against Persons	6.7	10.1	7.0	17.3	5.8	5.4
% Weapon/Narcotics	1.7	1.0	4.7	.0	2.2	.0
% Other	11.1	13.0	34.9	7.7	12.7	9.7
Class 1 Misdemeanor						
% Against Person	13.1	25.6	4.7	25.0	16.9	16.3
% Other	26.7	25.6	23.3	30.8	22.8	26.5
% Probation/Parole Violation	7.3	10.1	11.6	1.9	7.5	8.8
% Court Order Violation	2.9	2.4	2.3	.0	5.1	5.7
% Status Offense	15.2	3.4	4.7	3.8	19.2	17.3
% Other	5.2	8.7	7.0	13.5	8.1	8.5
N of Cases	763	207	43	52	2,370	65,107

Figure 23. Risk Assessment for Reoffending.



What happens to these cases? The data provided by DJJ showed that in Suffolk in 2005, a petition was filed in 99% of the cases and detention was ordered in 22% of the cases. Another category, “resolved or diverted,” was never reported in the DJJ data. Initially this seemed an interesting issue because when we compare the figures with the Commonwealth as a whole, there were fully 18% of cases that were “resolved/diverted.” We examined the other localities in District 5 and in Chesapeake. None of the other counties in District 5 recorded cases as diverted/resolved, but in Chesapeake fully 21% were recorded in this manner. The discrepancy in District 5 was explained as a recording issue by Bill Harrell, Director of the Fifth District CSU who reported that:

When we began the Juvenile Conference Committee (citizen panels as alternatives to court for first-time minor cases), the program design required that a petition be filed. The petitions are forwarded to the Clerk of Court, and held (not docketed) pending the outcome of the JCC process. If the juvenile complies with the JCC restoration plan, the petition is docketed and dismissed. If the juvenile fails to comply, the petition is docketed and the case set for a hearing (Personal Communication).

He provided us with an End of the Year Report for the 5th District Juvenile Conference Committee (FY 2003-04 prepared by Tim Heiler Assistant Director of In-Home Services Program). The Juvenile Conference Committee (JCC) is a voluntary diversion program

that serves the 5th District. The program is designed to address presenting charges and promote accountability and a sense of community while diverting youth from further involvement with the juvenile justice system. During the fiscal year, 163 juveniles received services (24 in Franklin/Southampton, 29 in Isle of Wight and 110 in Suffolk). Youth ranged in age from 10-18 with a majority (63%) aged 15 through 18. While males were more likely to be involved in the JCC across the city/counties (68%), females were more common in Suffolk (36%) than in Franklin/Southampton (21%) and Isle of Wight (28%). The vast majority (91%) of the juveniles successfully completed their program within in a standard four-month period, or completed the majority of their program and further participation was deemed by the administration as unnecessary. Another 5% had their cases closed for unrelated reasons like moving out of the area. Only 4% (*n*=6) failed to complete the program or received new charges while on the program.

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice reports also provide data on detention and the average length of stay. Figure 24 shows the percent of detention eligible cases receiving pre-dispositional detention. Suffolk is 5% less likely than the state as a whole to detain eligible youth and also less likely than other counties in the 5th District and on par with the city of Chesapeake.

Figure 24. Percent of Eligible Cases Receiving Predispositional Detention.

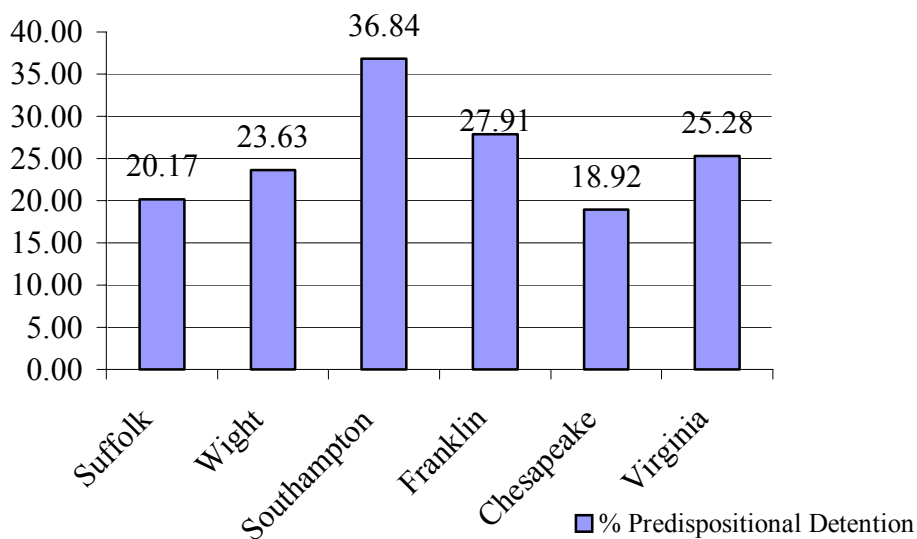
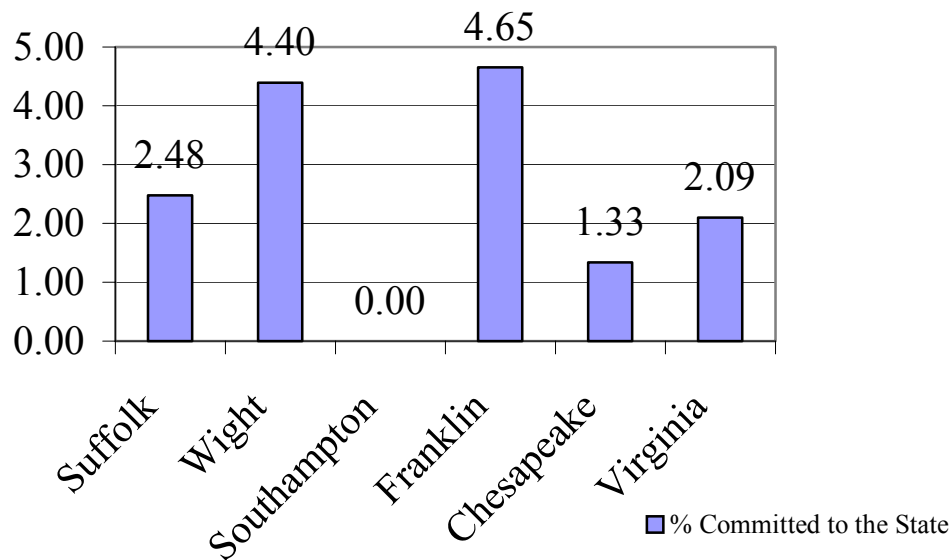


Figure 25 shows the percent of detention eligible cases that were committed to the state. The numbers, of course, are much smaller and to some extent less stable. Suffolk is slightly more likely to use predispositional detention than the state as a whole (note this was less than a 1% difference). Predispositional detention is also just slightly higher in Suffolk than in Chesapeake, and Southampton, which had no cases. Suffolk was slightly less likely than the Isle of Wight and Franklin (about 2%) to commit detention eligible offenders to the state.

Figure 25. Percent of Detention Eligible Cases Committed to the State.



In all, the data seem to suggest that effective programs are being used where appropriate, and while predispositional detention is relatively common it is lower than the state average. Furthermore, commitment to the state is used relatively sparingly. Given the extreme nature and the potential criminogenic effects of incarceration, the criminal justice response to youth appears warranted.

Recidivism

Recidivism refers to the degree of repeat offending by offenders who have had some sort of contact with the justice system. Two data sources on recidivism were used to assess recidivism levels among Suffolk youth. These data sources included the following:

- The Program End of the Year Report of the JCC (described above)
- Raw data on Suffolk juveniles were provided by Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission, which deals with a large number of troubled youth in Suffolk, Chesapeake, Franklin, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach.

Recidivism data for six months following program completion was collected by the Court Services Unit and provided by *The Program End of the Year Report of the JCC*. Of the 148 juveniles who completed the program, only 12 (8%) received new charges in the following six months (11 misdemeanors and 1 felony offense). Suffolk had a slightly higher rate of recidivism (9%, $n=9$) than either Franklin/Southampton (7.1%, $n=1$), and Isle of Wight (5.9%, $n=2$). Given the small number of cases, these differences are not statistically significant, and suggest overall that the programs are proving effective.

The Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission provided recidivism data for Suffolk youth who were admitted in fiscal year 2001-2002, allowing a full year of follow-up for each youth. Juveniles received services from eight programs described in Table 5 below. Altogether, there were 189 youth in the sample. The most common programs were the Juvenile Conference Committee ($n=69$), Challenge Outreach for Youth (COFY) ($n=31$), Anger Management ($n=24$), the Tidewater Juvenile Substance Abuse Program ($n=20$), and the COFY Electronic Monitoring Program ($n=19$). The In-home Services Program ($n=14$), the Crisis Intervention Home Program ($n=7$), and the Westhaven Crisis Center ($n=5$) were used less often among the Suffolk youth.

You should have someone that you trust in the program so you can talk your problems out...

----Comments of a youth participant from one of the focus groups.

Table 5. Programs Assessed In Recidivism Analysis.

Program	Description	n
Anger Management	Program designed to teach youth how to control their anger.	24
Juvenile Conference Committee	Voluntary diversion program: an alternative to the formal juvenile justice system for 1 st time offenders of misdemeanor charges. Goals: provide juvenile accountability, deter from the juvenile justice system, show the youth the community is concerned, facilitate resolution of the problem, develop needed community resources, and stimulate an opportunity for citizen participation.	69
In-Home Services	Intense therapeutic program for children as high risk due to abuse/neglect, delinquency, substance abuse or other behavioral/emotional problem. Also used when a child is being reintegrated into the family following foster care, incarceration or residential treatment.	14
Tidewater Juvenile Substance Abuse Program	Community based program focused on alcohol and drug abuse. A holistic approach focusing on the whole life as well as problems associated with the addiction. Includes: Family community involvement, group therapy, urine screens, recreational activities, relapse prevention, crisis intervention, and aftercare.	20
Challenge Outreach	Residential treatment and sanction program. An alternative to incarceration and to lower the youth's involvement in the juvenile justice system. Counselor visits in the home 3-4 times a week and at least once on the weekend. Includes: pre-dispositional sanctions program, violation intervention program, parole transition program, intensive probation, commitment diversion program.	31
Electronic Monitoring	Sometime in conjunction with Challenge Outreach. Juveniles are supervised through and electronic ankle bracelet and only allowed to leave home for certain activities (e.g., school).	19
Westhaven Crisis Center	Short term crisis care and case management services. Provides structure and support for residents in the public school setting. Includes the STAR program, drug testing, Jump Start program.	5
Crisis Intervention Home	Short-term residential crisis intervention for males and females aged 13-17. Support and assist probation officer in creating a placement plan, develop and coordinate services and treatments after the program in addition to reintegrating the youth with the family. Develop anger management skills, improve self-discipline, and courtesy.	7

Demographically, the youth are largely male (78%) and Black (76%). Ages ranged from 8 to 19 years (mean=15.8) and the majority were over 15 (75%). Just over half of the youth (51%) were rearrested during the follow-up period. Among those rearrested, the average length of time until rearrest was 226 days, ranging from 0 to 887 days.

Unfortunately, the crime that brought the youth the court services board was not available. However, the crime that the youth was rearrested for was documented. The rearrest offenses are described in Table 6. The most common charge at rearrest included assault (16%), larceny (10%), narcotic violations (11%), and burglary (5%). Data were also available on whether the crime was a felony or a misdemeanor offense. Forty-one percent of the rearrests were for felony offense and 59% were for misdemeanors.

Table 6. Types of Crimes Among Rearrests.

Crime	<i>n</i>	%
Assault	30	15.87
Larceny	18	9.52
Narcotics	11	5.82
Burglary	10	5.29
Trespassing	6	3.17
Weapons	4	2.12
Vandalism	3	1.59
Disorderly Conduct	2	1.06
Family Offense	2	1.06
Abusive and insulting Language	1	0.53
Contempt of Court	1	0.53
Fraud	1	0.53
Failure to Appear	1	0.53
Obstruction of Justice	1	0.53
Traffic	1	0.53
Sexual Assault	1	0.53
Alcohol	1	0.53
Kidnapping	1	0.53
Total	95	50.26

There were only a few variables available to assess their impact on recidivism. First, we crosstabulated program type with recidivism (see Table 7). There were statistically significant differences in the recidivism rates across programs ranging from 30% for the Juvenile Conference Committee to 75% for the Tidewater Juvenile Substance Abuse Program.¹ It is not entirely clear whether variation in recidivism rates across program types has more to do with the effectiveness of the programs, the extent of monitoring that makes detection likely, or the types problems the juveniles and the program deals with.

If data on the type of intake were available we might be able to tease this out. However, it seems likely that these programs deal with very different types of juveniles who will be more or less likely to reoffend and more or less likely to have their transgressions detected. We should also note that most of the programs provided by the Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission were evaluated by an outside agency in 1999 (Pindur and Elliker, 1999: executive summary). According to that evaluation, “all programs were correlated at a medium to high level with the characteristics of programs considered successful at the national level.” This suggests that the programs have an acceptable level of effectiveness and utility.

Table 7. Crosstabulation of Program Type with Rearrest.

	%	%
	Not Rearrested	Rearrested
Anger Management	41.7	58.3
Juvenile Conference Committee	69.6	30.4
In-Home Services	42.9	57.1
Tidewater Juvenile Substance Abuse Program	25.0	75.0
Challenge Outreach	35.5	64.5
Electronic Monitoring	36.8	63.2
Westhaven Crisis Center	40.0	60.0
Crisis Intervention Home	57.1	42.7

Chi-square=20.75, w/ 7 d.f., p<.01

¹ The small number of youth using Westhaven Crisis Center and Crisis intervention estimates may be unstable. We recomputed the crosstabulation without these youths and the results were consistent.

Table 8 shows crosstabulations of recidivism with age, race, and gender. The only statistically significant difference is between males and females. Males are approximately twice as likely as females to be rearrested following their participation in one of the various program offered. Blacks and Whites do not statistically differ in the likelihood of being rearrested, and age does not affect the likelihood of being rearrested.²

Table 8. Crosstabulations of Rearrest with Age, Race, and Gender.

	% Re-Arrested
Gender	
Male	58.5*
Female	23.8
Race	
White	45.7
Black	52.4
Age	
Less than 15 years	54.2
15 or more years	49.6

Chi-square 15.73, w/ 1 d.f., $p < .001$

The data show that program type (probably due to the types of cases dealt with by the different programs) and gender affect recidivism. Recidivism is unrelated to race or age.

Because the data are so limited, we searched the literature on recidivism and found a relatively recent meta-analysis on juvenile recidivism. A meta-analysis is basically a quantitative review of the literature, where effect sizes or correlations between variables of interest and recidivism are averaged across studies. Effect sizes theoretically range from -1.0 indicating a perfect protective factor, to 0.0 no effect, to 1.0 a perfectly predicting risk factor. Of course, there are no 100% predictors of human behavior so effect sizes tend to be much smaller and correlations around -.50 or .50 are generally considered quite robust. Because there is little reason to suspect that the factors associated with recidivism are unique to Suffolk, we felt that the review could aid in this aspect of the report.

² We assessed the age-rearrest relationship in a variety of ways (i.e., crosstabulations with other categorizations and a t-test comparison of mean differences in ages for those rearrested compared with those who were not rearrested).

Cottle and her colleagues (2001) reviewed 23 published studies from 1983-2000 representing 22 unique samples. Their review identified 30 predictor variables which were divided into eight domains: demographic information, offense history, family and social factors, educational factors, standardized tests scores, substance use history, clinical factors, and formal risk assessments.

Across studies, they found an average recidivism rate of 48%, just slightly lower than the 50% that we found in Suffolk. Like this study, they found that age was unrelated to recidivism and suggested limited range of age (juveniles are at that stage of the life course where offending tends to be highest). They found six studies that included a race (minority) variable, and although across studies the effect size was statistically significant, it was really quite small (weighted $r=.067$) and only slightly larger than our nonsignificant results ($r=.058$). In essence, their large sample size produced a statistically significant but small difference between minorities and Whites. They found only three usable studies that included gender. They also found males more likely to recidivate than females. Their weighted correlation was $.111$, while our estimate for Suffolk was much larger ($r=.289$).

Their results showed three variables with effect sizes greater in absolute value than $.300$: (a) age at first commitment ($-.346$), (b) age at first contact with the law ($-.341$), and (c) nonsevere pathology ($.305$). The importance of the first two variables suggest that youth who begin to deviate and run into problems with the criminal justice system at an earlier age are likely to continue their transgressions. Interpreting the correlation between age of onset and criminal careers has been widely debated. The correlation may be considered spurious, (e.g., some other variable or variables may cause both the early initiation and continuation/escalation). Others point to the deleterious effects of involvement with the criminal justice system and others point to some combination of the two arguments (see Laub and Sampson, 2003).

Family problems (.277), a history of conduct problems (.255), effective use of leisure time (-.233) and delinquent peers (.204) were also relatively highly ranked risk/protective factors for recidivism. The next tier (effect sizes from .10 to .19) included contact with the criminal justice system (e.g., length of first incarceration, number of out of home placements), criminal characteristics (e.g., type of crime, substance abuse), and test scores (e.g., IQ scores, standardized achievement tests, risk assessments). Finally, the smallest correlates (< .10) included demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status measures, and some school effects.

Together, these findings suggest that at this point in time, academics and practitioners are not terribly good at predicting recidivism. The strongest correlates included age at first commitment and age at first contact with the law, but even these two factors had a correlation of only about .35. Risk assessment instruments developed specifically for predicting recidivism did not do nearly as well as these two variables. The weighted correlations across six samples summarized in their review produced an average correlation of only .118. A better understanding of effect of age at first commitment or contact with the law could have important implications for the criminal justice system. However, without a firm understanding of these correlations, targeting younger offenders could do as much harm as good.

Together the data on recidivism is largely consistent with empirical research literature. Recidivism varies across programs and gender. Unfortunately, data was not available on juveniles being released from local detention centers or state confinement. However, the data do suggest that recidivism rates are in line with other localities in Virginia and elsewhere.

SECTION 4 PROGRAM NEEDS ASSESSMENT

One of the aims of the planning effort was to identify existing youth development/youth violence programs in the city of Suffolk and use that information to determine where gaps in service delivery and prevention planning exist. The risk factor/resource inventory sub-workgroup searched and surveyed prospective programs for youth and information was entered into the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Strategic Planning Tool. In all, 211 programs were identified. In addition, 12 financial resources (agencies or corporations that provided scholarships or special work programs for youth) and 19 infrastructure resources (primarily schools and other places where programs could be implemented) were identified. Programs were available for each targeted age group (0-2, 3-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18-22, 23+) and for each domain (individual, family, peer, school and community). Appendix A includes all of these programs as a directory.

Many of the programs operated under large umbrella organizations that provide numerous services. For example, the Western Tidewater Community Services Board is aimed at reducing the incidence of mental illness, mental retardation, other developmental disabilities, and issues of substance abuse. They provide services for all age groups focusing on several domains. The health department provides prevention and educational programs focusing on health issues (pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, parenting, etc.).

Obici Hospital provides scholarships, a junior volunteer program, summer day care, and a program to introduce youth to the field of health care as an occupation. The Suffolk Parks and Recreation Department offers several programs for youth including Future Leaders of Tomorrow, Planet Recreation, SPOR AC (life skills and athletic training), as well as scholarships for a reduced fee to enroll in their programs. Finally, the Suffolk Department of Social Services offers a variety of programs including CARE FAIR, which is held annually to provide a "one stop" event for health and human services for children up to 12 years of age.

Tidewater Regional Group Home Commission provides a wide expanse of services for families of youth aged 12 to 17. Among others, the Challenge Outreach for Youth program provides outreach detention, intensive supervision employing electronic monitoring, GPS monitoring, and Voice ID. Tidewater Regional Group Home also offers intensive in-homes services, sex offender services, and a juvenile substance abuse program.

Other programs were more tightly defined around particular issues. The Sisters in Action program promotes self-esteem building in females who are between 6 and 17 years of age. “Reunification” provides time limited reunification services provided to children who were removed from the home and placed in a foster family home or a residential facility. Reunification also supports parents or primary caregivers of these children in order to facilitate the reunification of the child safely and appropriately within 15 months of the child entering foster care. Services include, but are not limited to, individual, group, and family counseling, substance abuse treatment services, and mental health services. Early Start Program is a school-based program designed to reduce disparities in formal school entry and to eliminate the risk of academic failure.

Other programs were not focused on children at-risk but were actually for promising students. The STEP program, for example, promotes stimulating thinking in the educational process. This is an enrichment program for students in grades 2-3 who exhibit outstanding general intellectual ability. Similarly The Quest program is for academically gifted students in grades 4-8. Students work both individually and in small groups to develop their independent learning skills, their creative potential, and their higher level thinking abilities. Although these programs target gifted students rather than those at elevated risk, they are important in their own right.

While over 200 programs were identified, very few of the programs focused directly on youth violence or gang involvement. Although many of the church-based programs targeted peers as a risk domain, many were more involved in organizing the time of youth through constructive, proactive leisure pursuits. These are important activities; however,

the nature of church-based programming is such that it is difficult to reach children whose families are not church members.

In fact, the OJJDP provides a list of over 100 effective, model, and promising programs found across the country that focus directly on violence, gang activity or risk and protective factors for crime and violence. A complete list can be found at their website and shorter list is included in appendix B. Unfortunately, we did not find any of those programs operating in Suffolk. We recommend that effective programs that focus directly on violence or gang involvement be implemented in the schools. School-based programs are especially important because they can be implemented relatively easily and cost effectively. For example, Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T), which uses law enforcement officers in the school, has been evaluated with large scale cross-sectional and longitudinal data and is described as a promising program in the OJJDP's strategic planning tool. Dan Olweus's Bullying Prevention program delivered primarily by trained staff has been evaluated and is described as a model and effective program.

Develop programs that meet the real needs of the children. Some programs are the worst things to present to the child. You've got to do one to one basic human service stuff. That I think is the solution.

—Comments of a human services working during one of the focus groups.

Given the concern over truancy and potential school dropouts in Suffolk, Truancy and Assessment Service Centers (TASC) may be an important prevention program, especially since the program focuses on early intervention with children in grades K-5th (but allowing for extended targeting of older students). Youth are screened to identify those at high-risk for truancy and academic failure. Assessments are conducted to determine family needs. Although the program has not been rigorously externally evaluated, research suggests that referrals to centers reduced the average number of unexcused

absences approximately half and the program has been recognized as a “promising structure” by the Louisiana Legislature.

We also recommend programs that focus on life skills among high risk individuals before they actually get involved with the criminal justice system, and similar programs for those who are being released from detention facilities. Webster-Stratton’s Incredible Years Series has been rigorously evaluated and described as a model and effective program. The program includes a comprehensive and developmentally-based curriculum for parents, teachers, and children. The program is designed to promote social competence and prevent or treat conduct problem and emotional problems in young children.

Gilbert Botvin’s LifeSkills is a more general program in that it does not specifically target high risk youth. The program works to discourage social and psychological factors that promote the initiation and early use of substances. LifeSkills has two distinct programs. The first is designed for elementary school students and the second is designed for middle school students. The curricula is delivered in the classroom sessions over three years and includes “lecture, discussion, coaching, and practice to enhance students’ self-esteem, feelings of self-efficacy, ability to make decisions, and ability to resist peer and media pressure.” The program has also been rigorously evaluated and is described as a model and effective program by the OJJDP’s strategic planning tool.

Recognizing that most incarcerated youth will come back to the community, more attention is being given to the re-entry process and factors affecting recidivism. At the other end of the criminal justice system, Life Skills `95 has been evaluated and described as a promising program for prisoner reentry. An outcome study showed considerable program success. In the experimentally designed study, individuals assigned to the control group were about twice as likely as experimental group members to have been arrested and to have abused drugs and/or alcohol frequently since release. In addition, only 8% of the Lifeskills `95 youths associated frequently with former gang associates, versus 27% of the control group members.

Of course offenders identified by police might be targeted before they fully pass through the criminal justice system. The San Diego Repeat Offender Prevention Program (SDROPP) offers such an approach. Serious gang-involved members could be identified by the police and transferred to a Gang Suppression Unit (GSU), which provides intrusive supervision of documented gang members with an emphasis on a high level of community control through proactive enforcement. The SDROPP suggests that family and community agencies can be included through a case management strategy that emphasizes the empowerment approach suggested throughout this report. The program is described as an effective program in the OJJDP planning tool.

In summary, while a large number of programs exist in the city of Suffolk, few focus specifically on violence prevention but rather address certain and important risk factors. There appear to be specific programming gaps in the areas of school- and community-based programs focusing specifically on violence prevention and gang violence prevention. Future efforts should be directed towards providing synergistic programming across agencies in these areas, and these efforts should be based on an empowerment approach.

SECTION 5 FOCUS GROUPS

A significant component of an empowered response to youth violence calls for citizen involvement in all phases of the planning process. To create a foundation from which a youth violence prevention household survey could be developed, a sub-workgroup was created to assist in planning, organizing, and conducting focus groups with different stakeholders. The sub-workgroup was instrumental in designing the questions for the focus groups, recruiting residents to participate in the interviews, finding locations for the interviews, preparing the interview settings, and ensuring that the interviews were conducted as planned. Seven focus groups were conducted with the following groups:

- Parents
- Faith-based/Business leaders
- Human service providers
- Violence prevention advocates
- Youth
- Household interviewers
- Suffolk Initiative on Youth committee

Participants were asked to address a series of questions about youth violence prevention in the city of Suffolk. The interviews each lasted approximately two hours. Collectively, 85 individuals participated in the seven focus groups. Themes uncovered in the focus groups included the following:

- Sense of community
- Optimism about the SIY
- Business/work themes
- Youth involvement
- Public awareness
- Partnerships
- Underlying cultural influences

Each of these themes is addressed below. Where appropriate, specific quotes from the participants are included to highlight the specific themes.

Sense of Community

Implicit throughout the responses of the participants was a suggestion that residents of Suffolk are a part of a community which should take a direct leadership role in developing youth violence prevention measures. Said one resident, for example, “Neighbors and community—we know the kids, we need to help the kids. We need to bring back to the communities. There are so many things that we can do ourselves.” Echoing this theme, another focus group participant said, “Let the community know that we have a say so in what is going to happen to the children.” Part of the recognition for the need to involve the community stemmed from the realization that community problems are best resolved by community members. According to one focus group participant, “We cannot solve these problems unless we take it to the community.” This sense of community is important because, as most experts agree, effective youth violence prevention programs require commitment on the part of community members. Community commitment can be further encouraged and developed from the sense of community that already exists in Suffolk. This relates to the next focus group theme to be discussed, optimism about the Suffolk Initiative on Youth.

Optimism about the Suffolk Initiative on Youth

Focus group participants also expressed optimism about the activities of the Suffolk Initiative on Youth. When asked about “what the city is doing right,” virtually each of the focus groups pointed to activities of the Suffolk Initiative on Youth. This proactive approach was heralded as something that needed to be done. Said one participant, “We are not just asking the question what can we do. We are saying we can do something.” Participants from two other focus groups offered virtually identical responses:

- The city is bringing people together. I think that’s wonderful. We need this.

- I think Suffolk is facing this issue at the most appropriate time. It puts you in a position to talk about prevention. There is base line and statistical data that goes back years.

Participants also expressed hope that the initiative would continue. In the words of one participant, “Find some grants; keep it going for the next generation.” In calling for continuing the proactive approach, one respondent advised, “Let’s not create programs that look good/feel good, but don’t get any results at the end of the day. Look at programs that remediate the problems, look at meeting the needs head on.”

The optimism about the Suffolk Initiative on Youth suggests that this strategy has the capacity to generate community interest in youth violence prevention. Generating and sustaining interest will be an important ingredient in the empowered approach to prevent youth violence in Suffolk.

Business/Work Themes

Another theme arising in the focus groups centered on the role that businesses and work activity has on youth violence prevention. Participants suggested that youth who are able to work would be able develop career skills. In addition to building these work skills, others have suggested that employment has several direct and indirect benefits including the following: (a) youth who work receive financial benefits by getting paid; (b) getting paid can help youth build their financial skills; (c) youth can learn how to balance their time by working; (d) employment has been found to be inversely related to crime; and (e) working can provide youth the opportunity to socialize with peers who are more likely to abide by pro-social norms.

Focus group participants from each of the focus groups discussed the role of work in preventing youth violence. Consider the following two comments made at two different focus groups.

- They have nothing instilled as far as work ethic. We are giving them everything. They don’t learn responsibility, and when they get out

there they are not equipped to deal with it. They don't have the education, they don't have the skills to get the good jobs.

- At 11 we could work. We had the STOP program. It kept kids off of the street. It gave you something to look forward to for the summer. We don't have those programs.

The youth also discussed the importance of work during the youth focus group. The following exchange demonstrates that, at least those youth participating in the youth focus group, have an interest in working:

Do kids have places to work?

- Yeah, sell ice cream. Babysitting. Cutting grass. Go to camp to help out. Help the needy.
- Not too many places hire you.
- They did have STOP, but that doesn't work anymore—they stopped it.
- You could work at schools. Clean them up.

I think that one thing that children do not have is work. They do not have the means to buy the watches and rings and the tennis shoes and to do the things that they want to do and in these jobs—they need jobs. If we can give them summer jobs, we can look at the issues that we are talking about right here. Finally to teach them to process the information and not come up with criminal at the end. That is all that they are being taught. We need to bring them in and give them some employment. They really want to do those things, It's just not happening. As we bring them in, we talk to them about the violence, we talk to them about education, we talk to them about sex, we talk to them about confrontations.
----Comments from a human services provider describing the role of work.

Implicit within the comments about work are suggestions that employment opportunities for young people in Suffolk are scarce, or at least difficult to find. What this suggests is that formal strategies should be undertaken to involve businesses in such a way that they are willing to hire young people.

Youth Involvement

A related theme that arose in the focus groups had to do with youth involvement. Youth involvement is a broad idea based on two underlying assumptions insofar as an empowered approach to preventing youth violence is concerned. On the one hand, youth involvement as a prevention ideal suggests that positive pro-social activities should be promoted so that youth are too busy to get in trouble. On the other hand, youth involvement as a prevention ideal in an empowered approach to prevent youth violence also suggests that youth should be involved in the prevention planning process.

The importance of youth involvement surfaced in each of the focus groups. The following comments are illustrative:

- You got to have options for the youth. If you don't have something for them, they will find something to do, whether it's negative or positive... You have to have a wide range of activities to attract a wide range of kids that like different things. Not everybody likes educational things.
- We got kids that want to play ball, but have no place to play.

Participants called for several different strategies to promote youth involvement. In addition to suggesting creating and utilizing various spaces for youth involvement, participants also recommended youth forums, youth councils, and youth representatives on city boards. It is important to note that while discussing the need for youth involvement, in many of the focus groups, participants conveyed with one another that they were not fully aware of the kinds of activities available for youth. This relates to the next theme to be discussed.

<p><i>-They prevent us from getting into trouble by keeping us busy.</i> <i>-A person not busy, they are going to do something wrong, no matter what you say.</i> ----Exchange between two youth about the importance of keeping youth busy</p>

Public Awareness and Youth Violence Prevention and Youth Programs

The structure of the focus groups permitted open discussion between the participants, with the focus group leaders guiding the discussion, asking questions developed with input from the focus group sub-workgroup, and inserting probing questions as needed. One of the questions asked participants about the kinds of programs available for youth in Suffolk. When responding to this question, participants commonly expressed that they were not aware of many of the programs, or the structure of the programs, available to young people in Suffolk. In the parent focus group, respondents were so interested in this theme that they recommended that the household survey include questions about public awareness (a suggestion that was incorporated in the survey).

Along these same lines, participants also suggested that the media be used in three different ways. First, participants recommended that the media be used to promote positive images about youth in Suffolk. As one participant noted, “only a handful of youth create all of the problems, yet they get all of the attention.” Second, participants recommended that the media be used to promote awareness about youth development programs available to youth in the city of Suffolk. Third, participants suggested that the media be used as an educational tool that could tell residents how to protect themselves. Said one focus group participant:

Just as the media shows some of its dynamics about gangs, what gangs do and how they come together and some of the issues they deal with, if the media would be just as aggressive in educating society, how to identify certain behaviors, recognize certain behaviors, and how to approach and deal with certain behaviors, then I think that we would be in a better position.

One strategy that can be used to promote these ideals is to form partnerships with the media, public relations experts, and advocates. Indeed, the call for partnerships is another theme that surfaced in the focus groups.

Partnerships as a Strategy to Promote Youth Development and Prevent Violence

Related to many of the themes addressed above, many of the focus group participants discussed the need to form partnerships between various stakeholders in order to effectively prevent youth violence. Among other things, participants described the need to get all stakeholders, including businesses, schools, churches, and city agencies to work together. As an illustration, one participant recommended that churches be more utilized for meeting places. Others pointed out that parents need to be part of any partnership effort. One focus group participant made the following comments:

I agree with what you are saying, I see what you are saying, but we've got to look at this thing because we have some athletic programs that are set right now, but the kids that are participating are the kids that are going and they are the ones that have the active parents. The ones who take their kids. What about those kids who don't have the active parents to take them to these things? These are the kids that are causing the problem. The kids who don't have active parents. That's where we need to be looking. When we look at programs, we need to look at how we are going to get these parents to get the kids to participate in these programs.

The whole idea of partnerships fits well within the underlying assumptions of an empowered approach to prevent youth violence. To develop a strong youth violence prevention plan, it is imperative that multiple groups, agencies, and individuals representing an assortment of stakeholders become involved in planning the youth violence prevention strategies and subsequently implementing the plan.

Underlying Cultural Influences

A final theme arising in the focus group interviews centered on underlying cultural influences that ultimately impact youth violence prevention strategies. Race and class issues were discussed in each of the focus group interviews. Official statistics demonstrate that minorities and members of disadvantaged classes are over-represented in arrest, conviction, and incarceration statistics. Some participants suggested that the violence issue is inappropriately narrowly defined as something that minorities need to address and fix on their own. These participants stressed the need to go beyond this level

of thinking to promote an empowered response which would involve all citizens in the violence prevention effort.

Also related to cultural influences, respondents highlighted the way that cultural influences beyond Suffolk have a significant impact on what “goes on” in Suffolk. One participant, for instance, noted that “we don’t have an 18 foot wall” between Suffolk and other cities with higher violence rates. Also considering cultural influences, another focus group participant made the following comments:

I think that’s key. When we talk about prevention, I think what happens, typically, we focus on the local context. A lot of what happens in Suffolk, just like any other inner city that is in this country, the fallout is from national variables. And you see, that we sit behind the wheel when it comes to that. By just dealing locally with Suffolk, the metaphor just putting a band aid on a gun shot wound fits. There are a lot of national variables that contribute to this.

Conveyed within these comments is an understanding that the local response to this national problem must consider broader cultural influences.

Technology has really made the world so much smaller. And even though it’s not like, or the violence like there is in the larger cities, the media has bought into it. We used to be isolated. TV was pretty clean and straight. And if it didn’t really come here physically, we didn’t know about it. But now, with the media the way it is, what happens on the front line on the battle field in Iraq is on the news, we get to see it. What happens in every other neighborhood in every other city we get to see all the time. Our movies are becoming physically more violent. Our music and videos promote that kind of lifestyle, and our kids are being fed this all the time. And part of what we have to do is wake up and realize that we have to intervene to kind of give them some more things to think about and better things to do. I think that we have kind of been, as a whole, asleep at the wheel, thinking that this wasn’t our problem. The media just drops into your lap, and everything in the world becomes your problem. Even if you didn’t think that it was in your neighborhood, you better believe that it is.

----Comments from participant in the faith-based/business leader focus group

The seven focus groups elicited findings that proved instrumental in several ways. First, the findings were helpful in developing the household interviews discussed in the next section. Second, the focus groups were also useful in that they helped promote the empowered approach to the youth violence prevention planning process by including various stakeholders in the planning process. Third, the focus groups were instrumental in that various officials, representatives, citizens, and other stakeholders were able to come together and form partnerships with one another. Finally, the focus groups were useful in demonstrating the commitment that the participants have with regard to promoting positive youth development.

As an anecdote, consider that, as a strategy to encourage participation in the focus groups, participants were told they would have their names entered into a drawing and given the opportunity to win a gift certificate to a Suffolk business of their choice. These drawings occurred at the end of each focus group. More often than not, when the winners were named, they asked that their gift certificates be given to some youth program. In doing so, participants demonstrated that they were willing to devote their time to the planning process as well as their resources. This sort of commitment provides a solid foundation on which the planning and implementation process can be built.

SECTION 6 HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEWS

As part of the empowerment approach guiding the planning process, a household interview sub-workgroup was created to provide assistance in organizing the household interviews. This sub-workgroup used feedback provided from the results obtained from the community focus groups and directed its efforts towards performing the following activities:

- Reviewing and modifying the survey instrument
- Identifying community members to be hired and trained to do the interview
- Identifying areas for resident interviews
- Publicizing the interviews
- Helping interpret the findings

Each of these activities is discussed below.

Reviewing and Modifying the Survey Instrument

Using the findings from the focus groups as a guide, we developed a draft of a survey instrument that would be used in household interviews with Suffolk residents. This survey was distributed to the sub-workgroup. Members of the sub-workgroup provided feedback about specific items, ways to ask questions more directly, and possible questions they thought could be added to the interview instrument. Based on their feedback, the interview instrument was finalized. The survey instrument included 21 main questions (with several questions including multiple items). Sections of the survey included a demographic section, a section asking residents about their perceptions about violence, a section asking about program awareness and program utilization, and a section assessing the respondents' perceptions about their neighborhoods. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix C.

Identifying Community Members to be Hired and Trained to do the Interview

The household interview sub-workgroup also helped identify ways to recruit Suffolk residents who could serve as interviewers. An advertisement was placed in the newsletter distributed to teaching assistants and bus drivers. Also, one member of the sub-

committee agreed to serve as an interviewer. Initially, we started with six interviewers. After one week, three interviewers performed the majority of the interviews. The interviews occurred over a four week time span from the last week of May 2006 through the third week of June 2006.

Identifying Areas for Resident Interviews

The sub-workgroup also helped identify neighborhoods/areas interviews in which the household interviews would occur. Working with the Suffolk Police Department, both high crime and low crime neighborhoods representing as many geographical areas of the city as possible were identified. The neighborhoods/areas where the interviews occurred included the following:

- Old Town
- Williamstown
- Hoffer Public Housing in Hollywood
- South Suffolk
- Cypress Manor
- Parker Riddick
- East Suffolk
- Lake Kennedy
- Hollywood
- Wilson Lake Estates
- Lakeside
- Cypress Farm
- Kingsboro
- Eclipse
- College Square
- Wilson Pines
- Scottsfield
- Beamonsmill Trail
- New Estates (Burbage)

- Greensville Crescent
- Burbage Lake Village
- Riverview

The sub-workgroup provided maps and directions to the research team so that interviewers would be able to locate the interview settings quickly.

Publicizing the Interviews

With regard to publicizing the interviews, the sub-workgroup performed three activities that ultimately helped to encourage residents to participate in the interviews. First, they used traditional word-of-mouth strategies to encourage members of the Suffolk Initiative on Youth to tell others about the interviews. Second, the sub-workgroup and steering committee promoted the survey in various newspapers. The interviews were highlighted in at least four separate news articles, representing three different newspapers. Third, and perhaps the most widespread effort to publicize the interviews, the police department utilized its “Reverse 911” system to call all residents in the assigned neighborhoods and leave a recorded message describing the nature of the project and encouraging residents to participate in the interviews.

Findings

In all, the interviewers conducted 324 interviews. The demographic characteristics of the sample are described in Table 9. About 70% of the respondents were females and more than 80% were Black. Most of the respondents (nearly 60%) fell between the ages of 31 and 55 years, and nearly two-thirds reported being employed. Nearly 80% were high school or college graduates and just under 60% reported living in Suffolk ten years or less. Slightly more than half indicated that they had lived at their current residence for less than five years, and nearly 60% of the interviewees were renters. With regard to income, which is not shown in the table, approximately 40% of the respondents reported earning less than \$25,000 a year.

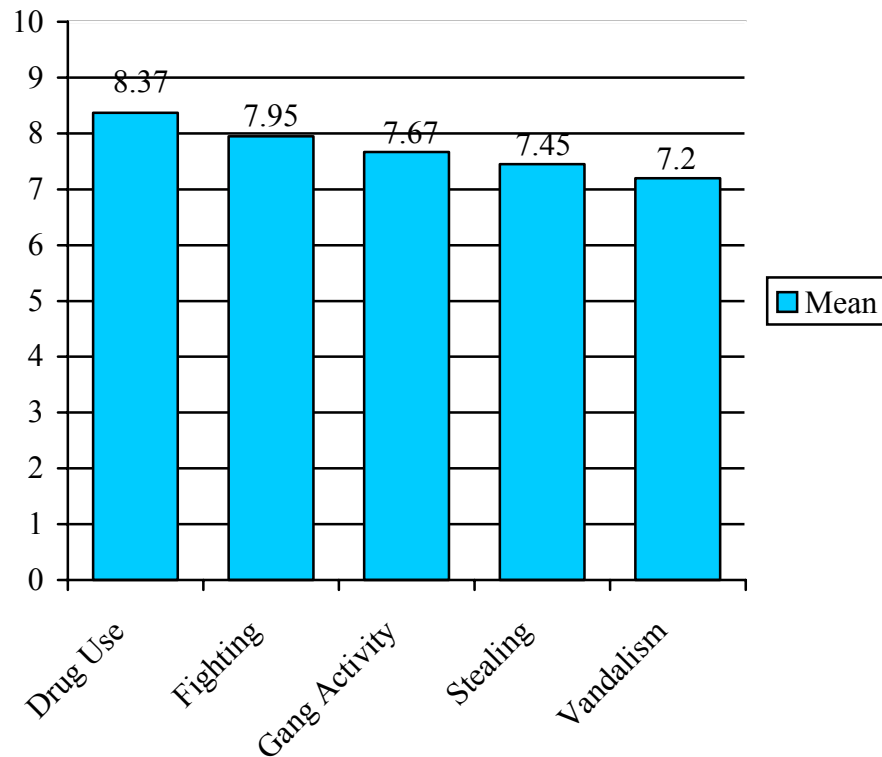
TABLE 9. Demographic Characteristics (N= 324)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	95	29.7
Female	225	70.3
Race		
Caucasian	43	13.4
African American	268	83.5
Other	10	3.1
Age		
Young (18-30)	70	21.7
Middle (31-55)	188	58.4
Advanced (56-93)	64	19.9
Marital Status		
Never Married	123	38.0
Separated/Divorced	53	16.4
Married	123	38.0
Widowed	25	7.7
Education		
Less than high school	72	22.4
High school graduate	103	32.1
Some college	76	23.7
Associate's/Bachelor's degree	50	15.6
Graduate or Professional	20	6.2
Employment		
Employed	202	62.3
Unemployed	122	37.7
Employment Status		
Full-time	156	71.9
Part-time	32	14.7
Other	29	13.4
Home Ownership		
Rent	188	58.2
Own	135	41.8
Lived in Suffolk		
10 years or less	74	23.1
11-30 years	93	29.0
31-45 years	89	27.7
46 years or more	65	20.2
Lived at Residence		
2 years or less	94	29.3
3-5 years	72	22.4
6-15 years	92	28.7
16-25 years	27	8.4
26 years or more	36	11.2

A question on the survey asked residents to indicate on a scale from 1-10 how serious they thought various issues were in Suffolk. These issues included drug use, fighting, gang activity, stealing, and vandalism. Results are reported in Figure 26. As shown in the figure, drug use tended to be the problem rated as most serious, though each of the issues were rated as serious by the residents.

That the residents reported the issues as serious is consistent with what one would expect from the residents who reside in high crime neighborhoods. Also, that they view the issues as serious tacitly suggests that the residents are prepared to become involved in efforts to respond to these issues. Involving residents in this response is consistent with an empowered approach to prevent youth violence. Their opinions can be used to direct and validate subsequent prevention strategies.

Figure 26. Perceived Seriousness of Youth Activities in Suffolk.

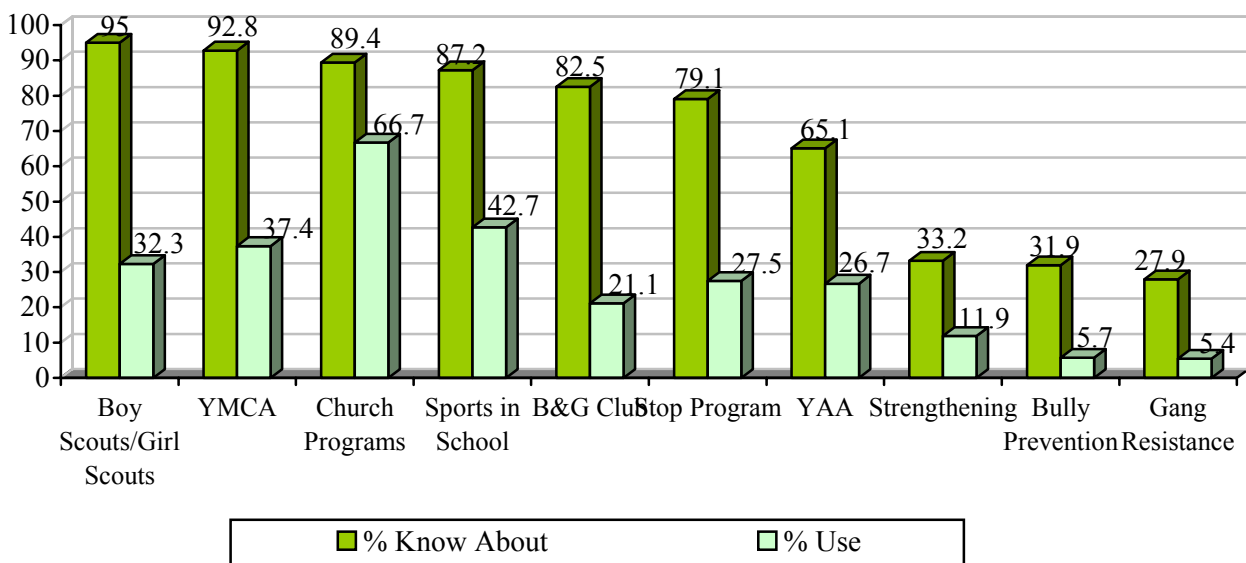


Residents were also asked about their familiarity with different programs in the city of Suffolk and whether their children had used the programs in the past. The results to this question are provided in Figure 27.

As shown in the figure, at least 90% of residents reported being familiar with Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, the YMCA, and church programs. Roughly 80% or more were familiar with the STOP program, the Boys and Girls Club, and school-based sports programs. About two-thirds were familiar with the Youth Athletic Association, and less than a third were familiar with the specific types of youth development/violence prevention programs included on the survey (e.g., Strengthening Families, Bullying Prevention, and Gang Resistance).

With regard to program utilization, church-based programs were among the most utilized program, with nearly two-thirds of the residents reporting they used them. The next most commonly used programs were school-based sports programs, the YMCA, and Boy Scout/Girl Scouts. The high proportion of residents using church-based programs suggests that faith-based groups should be involved in developing community wide violence prevention programs.

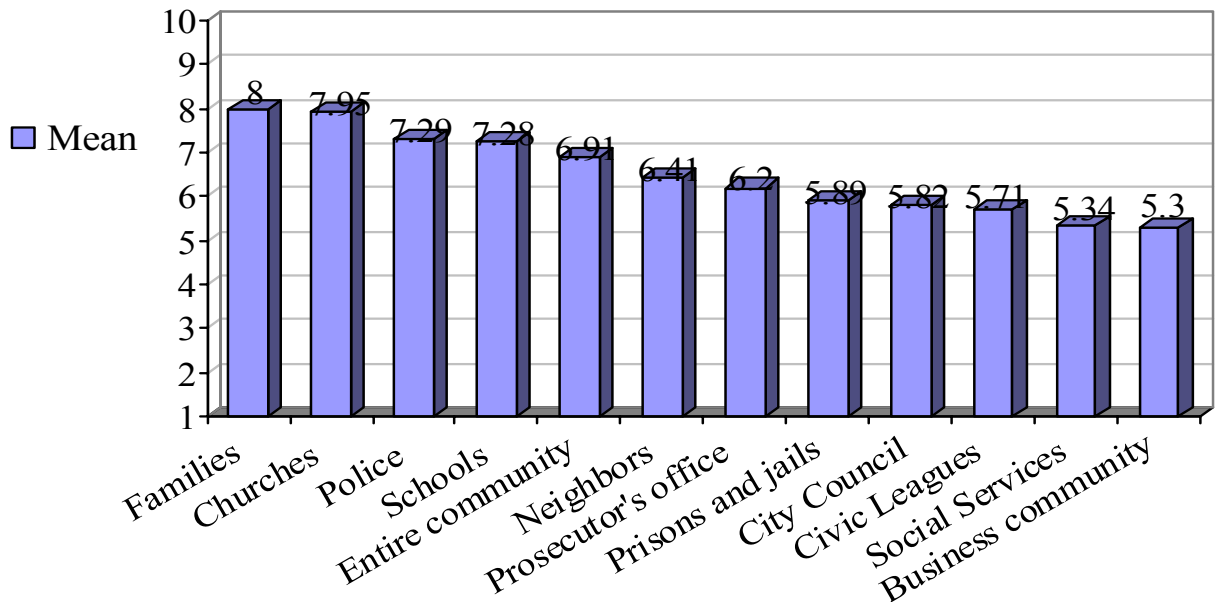
Figure 27. Suffolk Program Familiarity and Use.



Residents were also asked who they thought was responsible for preventing youth violence. Results are outlined in Figure 28. The higher the score, the more responsibility residents believe that the respective group has for preventing youth violence. Families and churches rated the highest in terms of responsibility for youth violence prevention according the residents.

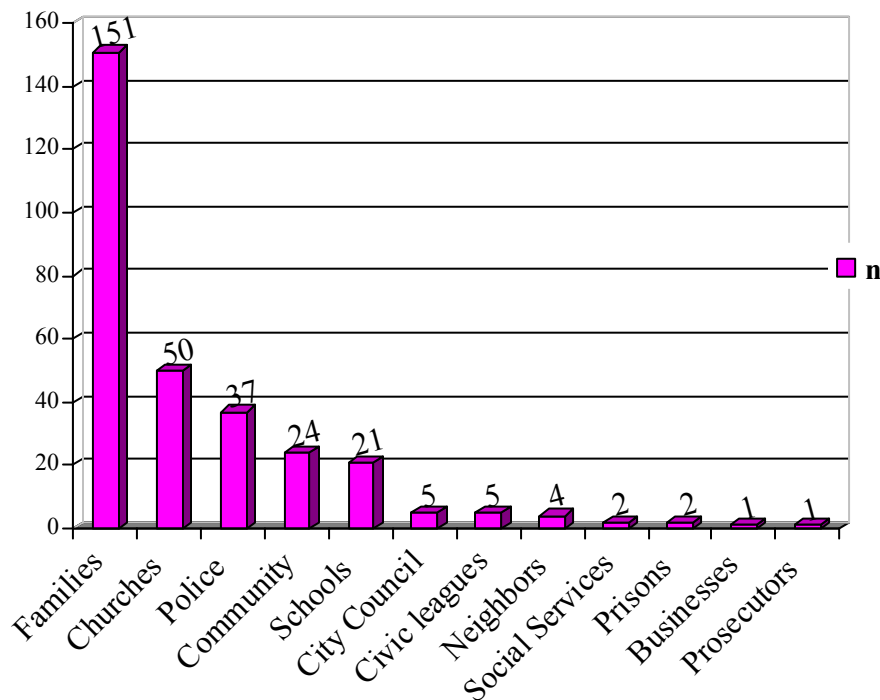
That families rated high is consistent with public opinion. That churches rated high reiterates the need to involve faith-based institutions in prevention efforts. If members of the high crime communities think churches have a responsibility for youth violence prevention efforts, involving those institutions in violence prevention efforts would potentially demonstrate to residents that their beliefs and attitudes are validated. The police, schools, and entire community also rated high in terms of residents' opinions about who is responsible for youth violence prevention.

Figure 28. The Responsibility of Preventing Youth Violence.



Residents were also asked which group, agency, or institution was most responsible for youth violence prevention. The results are outlined in Figure 29. As shown in the figure, the vast majority of residents indicated a belief that the family was most responsible for preventing youth violence. Follow up conversations with community forum participants and committee members suggested that while the family is seen as the most responsible, in some cases families are not doing enough to prevent youth violence. This suggests the need for family-based violence prevention programming.

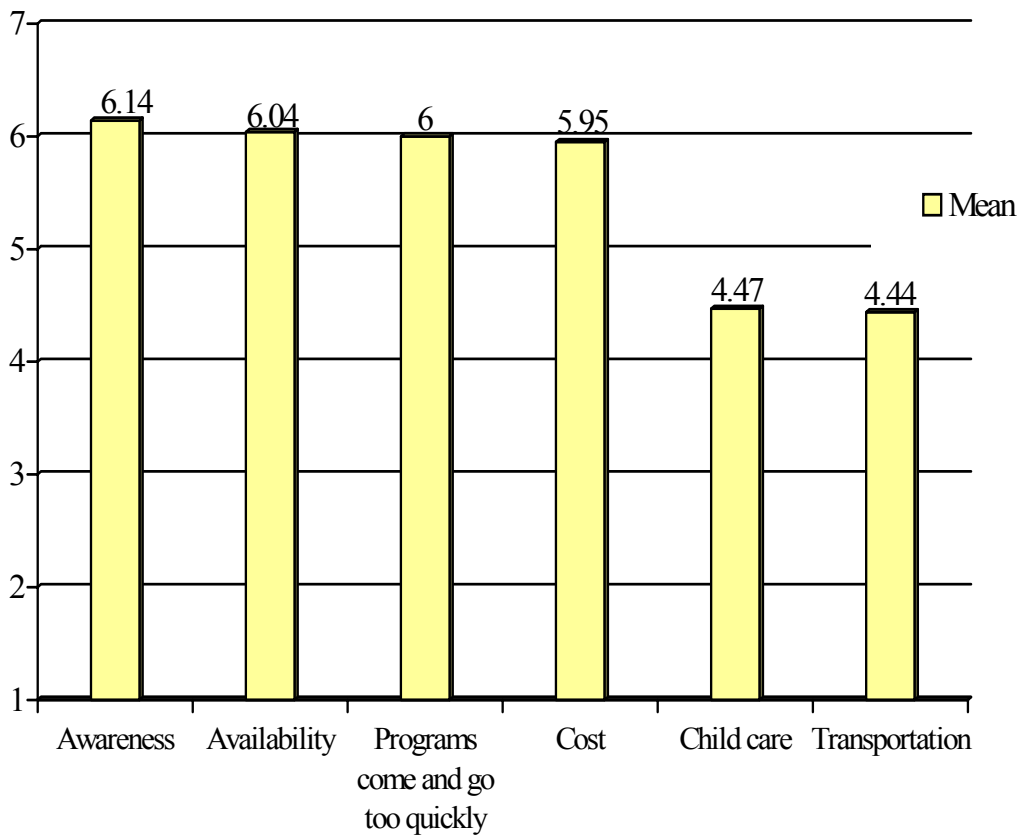
Figure 29. Most Responsible for Preventing Youth Violence.



That is where we need to get the parents involved. We need to start holding them accountable. These kids don't want what's best for them. They want what's going to please them in the moment. That's why we got to get these parents involved. Kids need to be able to do more than one thing. The basketball isn't going to bounce forever. You might not even get to college to play basketball. I tell my students, you need to be able to do more than one thing. You need to have something else to do. It boils down to is getting the parents to take back the authority that has been given them as parents
 -Comments from an advocate during one of the focus groups.

Residents were also asked about the barriers they thought prohibited program utilization. The results are outlined in Figure 30. Scores could have potentially ranged from 0-10. None of the barriers were rated, on average, as major barriers. Those items that were cited as the most serious barriers, relatively speaking, were awareness about the programs, availability of programs, and the short “shelf life” of programs. Transportation was not as major of a barrier as might have been expected. However, for certain neighborhoods, transportation may be more of an issue than it is for those neighborhoods closer to available services.

Figure 30. Barriers to Youth Programs.

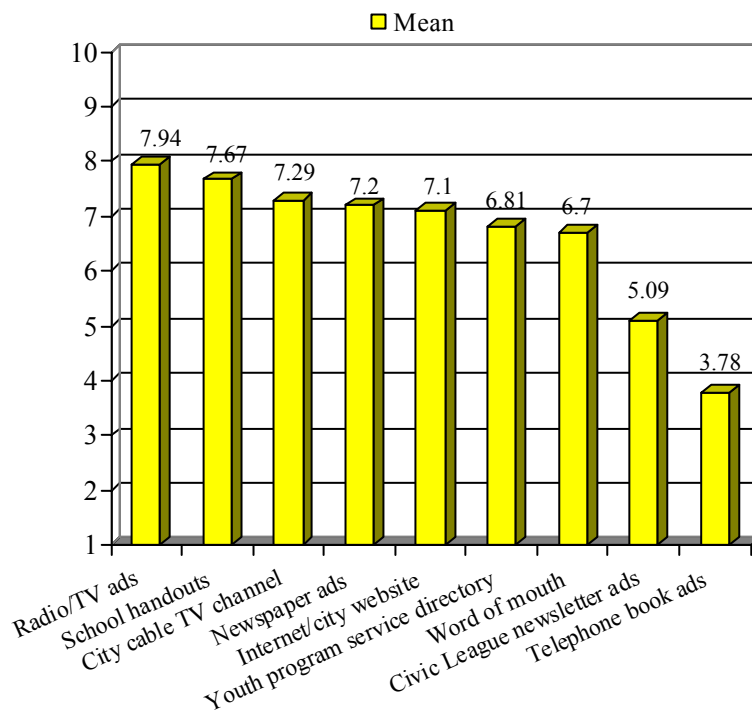


When we look at programs, we need to look at how we are going to get these parents to get the kids to participate in these programs
-Comments of a service provider during one of the focus groups.

Respondents were also asked to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 10, how useful various strategies would be to promote awareness about programs for youth in the city of Suffolk. Results are outlined in Figure 31. Higher scores indicate that the strategy is perceived as a useful strategy for public awareness.

Radio and television advertisements were rated as the most useful strategy, followed by school handouts, newspaper advertisements, the city cable television channel, and the city website. The respondents also rated a “Youth Program Service Directory” fairly high. Advertisements in telephone directories were rated fairly low in terms of their usefulness to promote public awareness about programs available for young people in Suffolk.

Figure 31. Public Awareness Strategies.



Residents were also asked about negative and positive qualities of their neighborhoods. Results are outlined in Tables 10 and 11. With regard to negative qualities, residents were asked about the degree to which litter, signs of vandalism, broken/boarded windows, and public light were problems in their neighborhoods. Choices included not a problem, minor problem, somewhat of a problem, and major problem.

Nearly half of the respondents indicated that litter was at least somewhat of a problem and approximately 40% said public lighting was at least somewhat of a problem. Just under one-third of respondents said signs of vandalism were problematic and about one-fourth of the residents cited broken windows as problematic. These items are relevant because a great deal of research suggests a direct relationship between these items and crime rates. For example, communities with more litter, vandalism, and broken windows are likely to have more crime.

Table 10. Problems in Neighborhood.

	Not a Problem		Minor Problem		Somewhat of a Problem		Major Problem	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Litter	107	33.2	62	19.3	52	16.1	101	31.4
Signs of vandalism	135	42.1	82	25.5	51	15.9	53	16.5
Broken/boarded windows	179	55.6	53	16.5	42	13.0	48	14.9
Public lighting	139	43.2	46	14.3	62	19.3	75	23.3

Table 11. Qualities of Neighborhood.

	Not at all		A little bit		Somewhat		A great deal	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Plants/flowers	127	39.6	48	15.0	64	19.9	82	25.5
New paint	122	38.2	61	19.1	64	20.1	72	22.6
Off-street parking	113	35.3	65	20.3	57	17.8	85	26.6
Bus service	143	44.7	48	15.0	58	18.1	71	22.2
Neighborhood cleanliness	68	21.2	62	19.3	89	27.7	102	31.8
General up-keep	60	18.6	63	19.6	94	29.2	105	32.6
Strong police presence	72	22.4	76	23.6	71	22.0	103	32.0
Strong community involvement	85	26.4	80	24.8	76	23.6	81	25.2

Alternatively, neighborhoods that possess a higher degree of positive qualities tend to have less crime and violence. As shown in Table 12, the positive qualities were fairly even distributed across neighborhoods. Anywhere between one-fifth to one-third of residents said that their neighborhood possessed “a great deal” of each positive quality. For each positive quality, more than 40% of respondents indicated that their neighborhood either possessed the qualities “somewhat” or “a great deal.” Alternatively, some qualities were rated as non-existent fairly often (e.g., bus service, plants/flowers, new paint). Analysis was conducted to see how the qualities related to one another. We found that, for the most part, residents who said they had strong police presence in their neighborhoods also described the other qualities positively.

The results of the household interviews are informative in several ways. First, the results point to the need to promote youth programs available in Suffolk. Second, the results suggest that community members see the family as most responsible for preventing youth violence, but they also see other institutions including the entire community as having a role in youth violence prevention. Third, residents also recognized that multiple agencies have a responsibility in preventing youth violence, suggesting the need in their view to develop programs that tap into an interagency prevention and intervention system. Finally, the findings point out the relationship between neighborhood qualities and violence. Efforts to prevent violence should parallel efforts to address other issues that are found in high crime neighborhoods.

SECTION 7
YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS:
STOP VIOLENCE

Based on the findings from each phase of the project, we developed a series of recommendations for youth violence prevention. These recommendations are captured under the acronym of “S-T-O-P V-I-O-L-E-N-C-E.” In particular, we recommend the following:

- **S**uffolk Initiative on Youth should continue its relationship building and collaborative efforts
- **T**arget youth violence with interagency/community partnerships
- **O**ffice on Youth should coordinate youth development efforts
- **P**ublic awareness campaign should promote awareness about programs available for youth

- **V**alue and promote diversity as a strategy to encourage collaboration
- **I**nvolve businesses, schools, faith-based groups, advocates, and others in prevention efforts
- **O**pen employment doors for youth
- **L**et youth participate in prevention efforts
- **E**xplore funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional funding agencies
- **N**eighborhood initiatives should be promoted
- **C**ommunity empowerment should be stressed as a prevention ideal
- **E**valuate, Identify, and Implement successful programs

These activities are discussed along with specific action items in the following section.

I think this is a start, as far as pulling people together...You have got to spend some money to create these programs. You've got to employ some people to go out into the community and tap into these folks. We sit in these offices, but people need to be out there to develop a rapport. I am talking about these young kids—these kids that have not got anybody. The key is you have to develop some kind of rapport. Once they get into the system, they treat them all the same. What Suffolk is doing right—is this initiative right here.
----Comments of a human services worker during one of the focus groups.

Suffolk Initiative on Youth should continue its relationship building and collaborative efforts.

The Suffolk Initiative on Youth has been instrumental in building interagency relationships and opening up communication lines between various individuals all striving to prevent youth violence and promote healthy youth development. The following agencies/representatives are among those that have been involved in the SIY effort:

- Members of city council
- Representatives from the city manager's office
- School officials
- Suffolk business leaders
- Representatives from the PTA
- Law enforcement, court, and corrections officials
- Church leaders
- Western Tidewater Community Services Board
- Representatives from the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney
- Officials from the redevelopment and housing authority
- Suffolk Department of Social Services
- Suffolk Department of Parks and Recreation

Virtually all of the agencies that have a role in preventing and responding to youth violence are a part of this initiative. Specific action items to demonstrate continued commitment to this initiative include the following activities:

- Continue regular meetings
- Add membership as needed
- Implement, oversee, and evaluate programs with demonstrated success
- Develop a formal mission statement
- Provide direction and oversight for Office on Youth
- Refining goals, objectives, and future activities accordingly
- Open communication lines between agencies

In terms of continuing regular meetings, the opportunity for individuals to meet face to face provides opportunities to build the interagency relationships that have been fostered from this initiative. With regard to adding membership as needed, youth members will need to be added when the current youth members graduate from high school. In addition, adding representatives will broaden the commitment that different groups have to the initiative.

In continuing to foster relationship building, it is recommended that the SIY develop a formal mission statement. Doing so would provide the SIY with guidance, direction, and an identity. This would also help in efforts to solicit state and federal funds to help support future violence prevention efforts. Along with the formalization of a mission statement, efforts should also be directed towards refining the goals, objectives, and activities of the SIY in ways consistent with that mission statement.

Target youth violence with interagency/community partnerships

Consistent with studies conducted elsewhere, this evaluation found that police presence, for the most part, had a positive impact on residents' perceptions about their neighborhoods. This finding was bolstered by comments made by focus group participants calling for more partnerships between criminal justice agencies and the community. Possible strategies to develop partnerships include the following:

- Enhance resources for community policing program
- Emphasizing community policing ideals
- Hosting a youth citizen's police academy
- Continuing truancy enforcement
- Enhance resources devoted to Project Exile
- Establish gang focused programs such as GREAT and/or the San Diego Repeat Offender program.
- Examine private/public funding partnerships for youth based initiatives.
- Formalizing Memorandums of Understanding with Civic Leagues defining roles of various groups in crime prevention

- Participating in community forums
- Develop partnerships to use school buses to transport youth to programs
- Develop partnerships with schools to promote youth violence prevention programs

In discussing these strategies below, it is important to note that our intent is not to suggest that any of these specific strategies must occur or be implemented; instead, we only cite them as possibilities. In the end, specific policing and prosecutorial programmatic decisions should be made by the police department and prosecutor's office respectively. We provide these suggestions only as recommendations. The police administration and prosecutor are in better positions to decide how community partnerships can be formalized.

With this as a backdrop, Suffolk's community policing program has been in place for several years. Most experts agree that community policing is a key ingredient in the community empowerment approach to preventing youth violence. According to the police department's website, "Every member of the Suffolk Police Department should embody the community policing philosophy while performing daily tasks. The Community Services Section of the Suffolk Police Department works closely with members of the Suffolk Community at large. This section performs a lot of proactive activities for the community and as such, is perhaps the most visible and often most recognized section of the Department." To fully ensure that community policing ideals guide partnership efforts, community policing ideals such as those described on the department's website must be communicated throughout the police department and the community. Along these same lines, specific activities can be carried out to promote these ideals.

While the above suggestions are directed towards building relationships based on citizens' perceptions towards law enforcement, specific recommendations regarding police activity can be made. For instance, we recommend that the truancy program

initiated earlier in 2005 continue. Project Exile should also continue. Both statewide and national evaluations suggest that these kinds of programs can decrease violent offending.

At the same time, other city agencies should be involved in developing partnerships with the high crime neighborhoods. A few of the programs recommended below (e.g., truancy assessment centers and repeat offender projects) foster these sort of partnerships.

We also recommend that partnerships be encouraged through the creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), created by the Suffolk Initiative on Youth. The MOUs can be useful in defining how members of the community can work along with criminal justice agencies, as well as other agencies, to promote efforts to prevent youth violence. As well, criminal justice agencies should remain active in participating in community forums. In addition, interagency partnerships should be broadly defined so that other agencies including, but not limited to, the schools, social services, and city manager's office are involved in the community partnerships.

In order to understand and control gang activity, a strong presence by the police and the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office is both warranted and required. It is essential that the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and the Police Department be provided with the necessary resources to form task forces to systematically eliminate these gangs and gang activities. To fail to do so will only lead to the strengthening of gang activity and an increase in violence and criminal activity in Suffolk. We must be proactive now or we will pay a very serious price in the future.
----C. Phillips Ferguson, Commonwealth's Attorney (*Gangs in Suffolk-Background on Gang and Youth Violence, Taskforce Initiative, and Analysis and Recommendations*, City of Suffolk, Office of Commonwealth's Attorney Memorandum to City Manager, February 6, 2006).

Office on Youth should coordinate youth development efforts

Using the funding that the city has received for the youth services coordinator, the city should develop an Office of Youth. As part of these efforts, it will be imperative to implement the following action items:

- Define duties and responsibilities of Youth Services Coordinator
- Define goals and objectives of this office

- Identify the city agency in which this office will be located
- Develop accountability structure for this office
- Develop Office of Youth and Family Services with members from different agencies and disciplines such as police, probation and parole, school truancy personnel etc.

These activities are fairly straightforward. With the current funding mechanisms in place, this office will be in a prime position to coordinate many of the activities laid out in this report. One strategy for coordinating these efforts would involve a structure composed of a youth services coordinator, police officer, probation officer, social worker and/or counselor, and a truancy person from Suffolk Public Schools as a start.

We've got enough agencies but sometimes they fall all over each other. We need a single source filtering place that can put it all in perspective.
----Comments of Suffolk native W. Ross Boone, (*Virginian Pilot*, June 17, 2006, reported by Phyllis Speidell).

Public awareness campaign should promote awareness about programs available for youth

Based on the focus group findings and the findings from the household interviews, we recommend that a public awareness campaign be developed to promote awareness about programs available for youth. Common public relations strategies can be used to achieve this aim. Particular action items include the following:

- Refining the Youth Services Program Directory as needed
- Using Radio/Newspaper/TV ads as the cornerstone of effort
- Promoting awareness about community policing strategies
- Promoting awareness about community prosecution ideals
- Continuing the community forums
- Showcasing success stories

As indicated in Section 4 of this report, one of the products that came out the SIY's planning process has been a Youth Services Program Directory (see Appendix A). This appendix lists more than 200 programs available for Suffolk youth. The directory should

be made available to young people and their parents. A simple way to do this would be to place the inventory on the city's website. Additional printed copies could be made available to families that do not have access to the Internet. In marketing these programs to Suffolk residents, the directory should be updated annually to ensure the accuracy of the directory.

The findings of the household surveys and focus groups suggest that radio, newspaper, and television marketing strategies would likely be the most useful strategies to generate awareness about the programs available for young people in Suffolk. In promoting these programs, efforts could also be undertaken to promote the community policing and community prosecution strategies that exist and are being further developed.

Feedback about the community forums suggests that the forums should continue. Topics can be selected based on current interests and success stories should be showcased at the community forums. The forums can also be useful in building partnerships with the community.

Value and promote diversity as a strategy to promote collaboration

National, statewide, and Suffolk statistics provided in this document suggest that minorities are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. While experts debate the reasons for the apparent over representation of minorities in criminal justice statistics, the simple fact is that any youth violence prevention measures must consider the diverse nature of the community when implementing youth violence prevention efforts. Specific action items related to valuing and promoting diversity include the following:

- Recognize role of diversity in developing programs
- Ensure that participants reflect demographic characteristics of the community
- Endorse strategies to reduce the rates of arrests and convictions of minorities
- Develop and implement "Best Practices" programs for at-risk minority youth

The initial step in promoting diversity is to simply recognize the role of diversity in developing programs. At the most basic level, programs, and participation levels in those programs, should reflect the demographic characteristics of the community. Endorsing

strategies to reduce the disparate arrest and conviction rates of minority youth would also fit within the ideal of valuing and promoting diversity to promote collaboration. In terms of developing “Best Practices” programs for minority youth, future youth violence prevention programs (described below) must be designed in a way that they address the needs of minority youth and their families.

Involve businesses, schools, faith-based groups, advocates, and others in prevention efforts

The underlying assumption of an empowerment approach is that multiple groups be involved in planning and implementation processes. Consequently, it should not be surprising that a recommendation coming out of an “empowered” planning process calls for continued collaboration. Specific ways that these groups can be involved in the youth violence prevention plan’s implementation process include the following activities:

- Convening meetings at businesses, schools, and faith-based settings
- Using these groups’ resources to impact youth through programs and activities
- Providing incentives for these groups to participate
- Demonstrating how specific risk factors and protective factors relate to these groups

In terms of convening meetings at businesses, schools, and faith-based settings, note that the planning process relied on these settings for various activities. One of the focus groups occurred in a faith-based setting. The community forums took place in two different schools. Many of the meetings occurred in the workforce development center. Continuing to use the physical facilities provided by these groups is a simple way to build on the collaborative relationship. Also, some, albeit very few, community groups already provide various forms of funding in the form of scholarships and so on for violence prevention efforts. Other community groups should also be encouraged to contribute financially to these efforts.

These groups can also be useful in conducting future community forums. Members of the groups could serve as speakers. Businesses, schools, and churches could help promote and advertise the forums (as well as the programs available for youth). In

addition, incentives could be provided to these groups (perhaps in the form for community service awards) for their direction in these efforts. Finally, efforts should be undertaken so that members of these groups recognize how their efforts can prevent youth violence and promote healthy youth development. One way to do this would be to illustrate how specific risk factors and protective factors relate to each specific group, as well as the community as a whole.

What I found out that works most is to establish a rapport with kids, not label the kids. I would just say, a lot of success comes from personal interaction...I am talking about grown people establishing one to one relationships with these children. And, their families. And not being afraid to go into the projects, not being afraid to make yourself vulnerable to them. Not being afraid to show your weaknesses too. And not being afraid to give them a chance. A lot of us are afraid of them. Professionals don't want them around. In fact, they are us. People refuse to accept them.

----Comments of a human services worker during one of the focus groups.

Open employment doors for youth

Based on feedback from the focus groups, interviews, and community forums, efforts should be directed towards opening up employment opportunities for young people in Suffolk. Although there are a few programs in existence (see Resources Section), a variety of strategies can be used to develop and promote employment opportunities.

These strategies include:

- Develop directory of businesses that hire youth
- Encourage businesses to hire youth
- Develop programs that promote career skills among youth
- Formalize internships, service learning, and volunteer programs for youth
- Demonstrate how work, as a protective factor, can address various risk factors

In developing a directory of businesses that hire young people, a valuable employment resource will become available for youth, and the tool can be used to market various Suffolk businesses. Along this line, efforts should be directed towards encouraging businesses to hire young people, either as part-time employees or interns. Incentives such as recognition at an awards ceremony would be a simple way to encourage

businesses to hire young people. More formal mechanisms to encourage businesses to hire youth might entail having businesses participate in a structured youth employment program that might provide some sort of direct incentive for participation.

While program gaps were considered in an earlier section of this report, thought should be given to developing programs that promote career skills among young people. These programs would require partnerships between businesses, the community, and the city. In addition, efforts should be directed towards formalizing internships, service learning, and volunteer programs for youth. Funding streams for these kinds of programs are discussed below and highlighted in Appendix D.

In addition to developing employment opportunities through increasing capacity, it is imperative that businesses and community members recognize how work, as a protective factor, can address various risk factors. Work provides structure in young people's lives and, for some, provides an inherent motivation to avoid getting into trouble. Perhaps more importantly, developing career skills at an early age provides youth the foundation needed to compete for jobs later in their lives.

Let youth participate in prevention efforts

Just as employment opportunities help prevent youth crime and violence by providing structure and routine to young people, involving youth in violence prevention initiatives can have a similar effect. Further, continuing to seek input from young people will ensure that the process is responsive to the needs of young people. The following activities will promote youth participation in prevention efforts:

- Convene youth forum solely for youth
- Explore feasibility of convening youth courts
- Explore possibility of a youth council
- Develop partnerships between young people and adults
- Conduct wide scale youth survey to determine interests and needs

For participants in this process, the community forums provided an outlet for interested parties to communicate their concerns with practitioners and other residents. Similar

forums could be designed for young people, with an aim towards discussing healthy youth development. In addition, other jurisdictions have successfully developed youth councils and youth courts as strategies to empower young people and bring them into the violence prevention processes. Partnerships should be developed between young people and adults. A participant at one of the community forums recommended that some sort of system involving older, retired persons in the process be developed. Other communities have developed programs in which young persons are paired with elderly persons who serve as mentors and provide guidance, direction, insight, and a watchful eye over young persons. Such an approach is an example of the kinds of partnerships that can be developed between young people and adults.

Considering the involvement of young people in the violence prevention process, baseline data should be collected through a representative youth survey designed to determine interests and needs. While we have identified the programs and gaps that exist, it is important to determine whether the programs that would appear to fill those gaps would actually be well received by young people in the city of Suffolk.

Ask the children what they need. All children are not interested in sports. You need something for the whole child. You need something for every child. Please don't leave them out. Please include them. Whatever you bring to the table, if it doesn't interest them, they aren't gonna take it. If it doesn't meet them at their point of need, you've lost them. Please, get a youth forum. Get some surveys out to them. Find out. It would be an invaluable experience.

----Comments made by a parent at one of the focus groups.

Explore funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional funding agencies

Any new formal programs arising out of this youth violence prevention plan will require funding. In providing and seeking funding, the following action items arise:

- Promote the fact that prevention efforts ultimately saves monies that would be spent on suppression and intervention
- Recognize that local funding must be provided
- Seek state funding from agencies such as DCJS, DJJ, VDH, GOSAP, DSS, and others

- Pay particular attention to *Prevention Comes First* funding stream from GOSAP
- Seek funding from federal funding streams

Those involved in developing prevention programs should stress to funders the fact that prevention ultimately costs less than suppression and intervention. One of the obstacles to developing prevention initiatives is that the positive effect is not always noticed immediately. With early intervention programs for pre-school children, for instance, one would not be able to identify the success of the program until those children became young people at risk of violence. Some programs, like parenting programs, may yield more immediate visible effects. The point here is not to suggest one program over the other, but to suggest that successful prevention programs must be defined and understood to be cost effective.

While they are cost effective, prevention programs are not without costs. Local funding must be provided for virtually any prevention program to begin. With the local contributions, city representatives will be in a better position to seek state and federal funding. Appendix D includes descriptions of more than sixty state and federal agencies that have funded youth development/violence prevention programs. State agencies including the Department of Criminal Justice Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Virginia Department of Health, Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (GOSAP), and Department of Social Services are probably the state agencies most likely to provide funding for the activities that will arise out of this plan. In seeking funding, particular attention should be given to the *Prevention First* funding stream that will soon be created out of GOSAP. In addition, numerous opportunities for federal funding exist.

Most of these funding streams have two basic requirements. First, they require that a local contribution is made. Second, they require that some form of collaboration exists between the agencies involved in preventing and responding to youth violence. The SIY certainly meets this requirement.

Neighborhood initiatives should be promoted

Part of an empowerment approach to preventing youth violence includes the need to involve neighborhoods in the implementation process. Strategies to promote neighborhood initiatives include the following:

- Continuing to promote initiatives such as Neighborhood Night Out
- Promoting awareness about neighborhood recreation centers
- Moving community forums around
- Highlighting effective neighborhood initiatives in community news
- Identifying and promoting incentives to engage in youth development efforts
- Encouraging and assisting neighborhoods and neighborhood churches to impact their community's youth through structured activities and programs
- Maximizing use of available facilities for programs

Many of the activities centered on promoting neighborhood initiatives are based on continuing ongoing activities and are related to the other recommendations set forth in this report. Promoting and increasing awareness about these activities will help in developing neighborhood initiatives. Also, the availability of neighborhood recreation centers and parks can be stressed to community members. The future community forums should be held in various neighborhoods, with thought given to having neighborhoods sponsor or host the forums. In addition, successful neighborhood initiatives should be highlighted. Where feasible, efforts should be directed towards providing neighborhoods with incentives to engage in neighborhood initiatives.

Community empowerment should be stressed as a prevention ideal

In developing the prevention initiatives, community empowerment should continue to be stressed as a prevention ideal. Community empowerment ideals have guided the planning process. Consequently, any activities arising out of this planning process are founded on community empowerment ideals. Specific strategies to continue to promote community empowerment as part of the prevention process include the following suggestions:

- Community forums should be held addressing other successful empowerment efforts

- Continue to solicit ideas from residents
- Develop and formalize Memorandum of Understanding about youth development roles and youth violence prevention strategies with civic leagues

In developing future community forums, one particular forum should focus on similar successful empowerment efforts. In doing so, members of the SIY will be able to continue to solicit input and ideas from residents. In addition, the SIY should consider developing and formalizing a Memorandum of Understanding with civic leagues so that respective parties are aware of one another's roles and expectations in youth development and youth violence prevention.

Evaluate, Identify, and Implement programs that are successful and needed to fill gaps

Efforts to develop violence prevention programs and processes should be continually monitored to determine whether changes need to be made during the implementation phases. It will be necessary to develop specific measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound measures to track progress. Specific action items include the following:

- Develop and implement Truancy Assessment Centers
- Implement Gang Resistance Education Programs
- Develop and implement recidivism program to address repeat offending

Beyond evaluating programs in the future, it is important to identify those programs that would fill existing gaps in the city of Suffolk. These programs were discussed in Section 3 of this report and promising programs are highlighted in Appendix B. In summary, the findings described in the prior sections suggest that while a large number of programs exist in the city of Suffolk, few focus specifically on violence prevention. Most programs focus on specific and important risk factors. Specific programming gaps in the areas of school- and community-based programs exist with few, if any, programs focusing specifically on violence prevention and gang violence prevention.

The OJJDP research tool provides information on over 100 programs. From that list we extracted approximately 20 programs based on the risk and protective factor section of

this report. From that list we detailed four areas and made more specific recommendations. Targeting violence in the schools we suggest exploring the potential for implementing the Gang Resistance Education and Training and/or Bullying Prevention program. We recommend both the LifeSkills or the Incredible Years Series for developing general life and social skill, the former a universal program the second focusing on high-risk children. Concerning recidivism and the problems juvenile delinquents experience returning to the community we recommend either Life Skills '95 or the San Diego Repeat Offender Prevention Program. Finally, given concerns over truancy, we recommend developing a Truancy and Assessment Service Center.

Programs such as the Truancy and Assessment Service Center and San Diego Repeat Offender Prevention Program could be implemented almost completely with existing personnel donated from existing agencies. With regard to the truancy center, for example, children or families could be referred to the center from many avenues including schools, probation and parole, courts, police, or other agencies based on an identified symptom. They would be assessed and referred for programming either within the city or outside. Participation could be voluntary or required as a condition of the schools, courts, or other formal mechanism. The success of the program is tied to the collaboration that occurs between the various groups and agencies involved.

Future efforts should be directed towards providing synergistic programming across agencies in these areas, and these efforts should be based on an empowerment approach. In deciding the direction for future youth programs, we recommend that planners select programs that would bring together groups that are not likely to work together in order to ensure a successful outcome. Such a decision would also be in line with the empowered approach to prevent youth violence.

You've got to look at the whole thing. Some parents just don't know how. It's all of us. The violence comes from the community.

----Comments of a human services worker during one of the focus groups.

**SECTION 8
ACTION PLAN**

The prior activities were presented to the SIY steering committee as part of a presentation and a written draft report. Members of the steering committee used these recommendations as a starting point to discuss and develop the action plan. After developing an initial draft action plan, the committee presented the plan to the SIY Workgroup. Changes were made based on feedback from the workgroup. The plan derived from this planning process was presented to City Council on August 16th at a work session.

Council members praised the report and provided feedback and suggestions. Their suggestions focused on the need to incorporate a component on strengthening families, developing a mission/vision statement for the Office on Youth, evaluating gun buy back programs, and ensuring that all citizens get involved.

Based on the feedback from the council members, the action plan was modified to incorporate the council members' recommendations. By incorporating feedback from community members, agency officials, and policy makers, the following plan meets all of the ideals of an empowered approach to youth violence prevention.



- S**uffolk Initiative on Youth should continue its relationship building and collaborative efforts
- T**arget youth violence with interagency/community partnerships
- O**ffice on Youth should coordinate youth development efforts
- P**ublic awareness campaign should promote awareness about programs available for youth

- V**alue and promote diversity as a strategy to encourage collaboration
- I**nvolve businesses, schools, faith-based groups, advocates, and others in prevention efforts
- O**pen employment doors for youth
- L**et youth participate in prevention efforts
- E**xplore funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional funding agencies
- N**eighborhood initiatives should be promoted
- C**ommunity empowerment should be stressed as a prevention ideal
- E**valuate, identify, and implement programs that are successful and needed to fill gaps

STOP VIOLENCE

- Suffolk Initiative on Youth (SIY) should continue its relationship building and collaborative efforts.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Provide direction and oversight to Office on Youth.	City Manager's Office	On-going
Refine goals and objectives to ensure relationship building.	Office on Youth, Community	120 days
Implement and oversee programs that enhance collaboration efforts.	Office on Youth, Community	120 days

STOP VIOLENCE

- Target youth violence with interagency/community partnerships.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Implement Suffolk Public Schools truancy model in all high schools.	Suffolk Public Schools, Police Department, Parents	30 days
Host a youth citizen’s police academy.	Police Department, Communications, Parks and Rec., Suffolk Public Schools	120 days
Partner with the Office of the Attorney General to conduct “town hall” meetings on gang awareness.	Police Department, Commonwealth Attorney, Office of Attorney General	120 days
Establish a Gang Prevention Unit in the City of Suffolk (i.e. San Diego Model).	Police Department, Commonwealth Attorney, Probation and Parole, Court Services Unit	180 days

S T O P V I O L E N C E

- Office on Youth should coordinate youth development efforts.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Establish Office on Youth.	City Manager's Office	90 days
Hire Youth Services Coordinator.	City Manager's Office, Human Resources, U.S. Department of Justice	90 days
Develop a mission/vision statement that will guide the implementation of the action plan.	City Manager's Office, SIY Workgroup	60 days
Manage, coordinate, and implement the strategic plan.	Office on Youth	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Public awareness campaign should promote awareness about programs available for youth.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Enhance promotion and increase access to existing programs and services for youth and families.	Communications, Parks and Recreation, Social Services, Suffolk Public Schools	On-going
Involve media in promoting awareness.	Communications, Media	60 days
Identify mechanism to recognize successful youth.	Communications, PTA	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Value and promote diversity as a strategy to encourage collaboration.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Ensure that programs are diverse and culturally sensitive.	Office on Youth	On-going
Develop and implement “Best Practices” programs for at-risk or disadvantaged youth.	Office on Youth	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Involve businesses, schools, faith-based groups, advocates, and others in prevention efforts.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Develop and implement Truancy Assessment Centers.	Police Department, Suffolk Public Schools, Parents	180 days
Secure sponsorships of youth programs and opportunities.	Office on Youth, Business community, Faith-Based Groups Civic Leagues, Suffolk Public Schools, League of Women Voters	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Open employment doors for youth.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Develop employment initiative for youth with the business community.	Office on Youth, Economic Development, Social Services, Parks and Recreation	120 days
Develop programs that promote career skills among youth.	Office on Youth, Workforce Development Center	120 days
Evaluate opportunities to encourage employment for at-risk youth as part of city contract awards.	City Manager's Office, Office on Youth, Department of Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management	180 days

STOP VIOLENCE

- Let youth participate in prevention efforts.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Convene a youth forum.	Office on Youth, Parks and Recreation, Youth	120 days
Explore possibility of establishing a youth council.	Office on Youth, Parks and Recreation, Youth	120 days
Enhance transportation opportunities for youth.	Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Suffolk Public Schools, Faith-Based Groups, Youth	On-going
Evaluate the development of a youth court program.	Office on Youth, Commonwealth Attorney, Suffolk PTA	180 days

STOP VIOLENCE

- Explore funding opportunities from traditional and non-traditional funding agencies.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Solicit funding from local, state, federal, business, and private foundation sources.	Management Services	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Neighborhood initiatives should be promoted.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Promote awareness and use of joint-use recreation facilities.	Communications, Parks and Recreation, Suffolk Public Schools	On-going
Continue to fund after school programs and promote the use of private non-profit facilities.	Office on Youth, Parks and Recreation, Faith-Based & others	On-going
Secure funding to complete East Suffolk Recreation Center.	City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation	90 days

STOP VIOLENCE

- Community empowerment should be stressed as a prevention ideal.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Maintain involvement and dialogue with the community by continuing to promote civic/personal responsibility.	Office on Youth, City Manager's Office, Community	On-going
Establish youth council.	Office on Youth Parks and Recreation, Community, Youth	120 days
Develop and formalize Memorandum of Understanding with civic leagues regarding involvement of youth in civic development activities.	City Manager's Office, Civic Leagues, Faith- Based Groups, Business Community, League of Women Voters	On-going

STOP VIOLENCE

- Evaluate, identify, and implement programs that are successful and needed to fill gaps.

Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe
Continue to evaluate promising and best practices programs for potential implementation.	Office on Youth	On-going
Evaluate and update the strategic plan.	Office on Youth	On-going
Implement “Best Practices” family counseling and parenting skills programs.	Office on Youth	On-going
Implement “Best Practices” programs for gun violence prevention by exploring possibility of gun buy back programs.	Office on Youth	On-going

APPENDICES

