

Early Investments Pay Off: How Funding Early Care and Education Programs Prevents Future Crime

Investments in high-quality early care and education programs benefit children and their communities in multiple ways. Participating children experience not only **greater academic and economic outcomes**, but also **lesser involvement in violent crime and the justice system**. These benefits translate to millions of dollars in community savings over the course of a single child's life.

With 90% of brain development occurring by age 4, the early years are a critical time in a child's life for building foundational skills and prosocial behaviors

- Early cognitive and emotional development difficulties may contribute to later aggressive and/or disruptive behavior
- Problem behaviors developed early and not addressed by kindergarten can be predictive of future misbehavior and criminal activity

High-quality early care and education programs combine developmentally appropriate components to support whole child development, including educational, social-emotional, and physical progress

- Children who attend high-quality early care and education programs are less likely to be referred for special education services, experience fewer grade retentions, and are more likely to graduate from high school

Children enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs are less likely to be arrested or engaged in violent crime

- Participants in a Chicago preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds were over 40% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18
- A longitudinal study of the High/Scope Perry preschool program found that non-participating children were five times more likely to have been arrested five or more times by age 27

Investment in high-quality early care and education can save millions of dollars in crime prevention

- Preventing a child from dropping out of school, using drugs, and engaging in criminal activity can save an estimated \$2.6 million to \$4.4 million over that child's lifetime

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