

REMARKS

OF

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AT THE

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Thank you, Steve [Handelman]. I'm delighted to be here – and thrilled to be asked to deliver today's keynote address.

It's a privilege to join so many of the premier researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and journalists working in criminal justice today – and to be part of this dynamic discussion about crime and punishment in America. Your theme – “Smart Justice” – very suitably honors Harry Guggenheim and the scholarly principles for which he stood and on which he established his wonderful foundation. It is so encouraging to see his spirit of scientific pursuit – and his hope for solutions to our most vexing problems – alive and well in this hall.

I'm also very pleased to see the ever-strengthening collaboration between academics, justice system professionals, and members of the media, represented by this gathering. And I commend Steve and the John Jay Center on Media, Crime, and Justice for their pioneering work to advance the public discourse about crime and safety. Our collective understanding of these issues has benefitted immeasurably by the networking and information sharing the Center has enabled.

And let me also recognize that you have all had a role in moving the discussion forward. As researchers continue to break new ground, practitioners and policymakers are paying close attention to their findings. And reporters are leaning on the latest social science to inform their stories. We seem to have entered a new age of intellectual curiosity around the causes and consequences of crime.

And that goes for those of us in the federal government. It was President Johnson's Crime Commission that first articulated an expansive and durable federal role in controlling crime. Its final report said the “greatest need” in criminal justice “is the need to know.” That need has always been great, but only recently, I think, have we fully embraced it as a practical goal to be met. What's more, in an era of striking partisanship, we've managed to come to agreement on issues that have historically and bitterly divided our parties.

I'm especially proud of the part that we – at the Office of Justice Programs – have played in improving knowledge about what works in the fields of criminal and juvenile justice. Our National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics have, for many years, made significant contributions to our base of knowledge. But in recent years, we've expanded the scope of our research and data-gathering activities.

Beginning in 2009, we launched our Evidence Integration Initiative – or E2I, as we call it. This is an ambitious effort to make scientific evidence the foundation of all our work – not just the hallmark of our science bureaus, NIJ and BJS, but the touchstone of everything we do programmatically, whether it's supporting law enforcement, improving juvenile justice, serving victims, or managing sex offenders.

Through it, we hope not only to improve the quantity and quality of the evidence we produce but to make it available and accessible to people in the field who can really

benefit from it – police and corrections officers, prosecutors, judges, victim advocates, and juvenile justice professionals. We had always had a mandate, through NIJ, to target our research for practical use, but we had never systematically tied our research and programmatic activities together. So this represented a very new way of doing business for us.

Our work under E2I is most strongly reflected in our “what works” database known as CrimeSolutions.gov. This is the brainchild of Laurie Robinson, who many of you know was OJP’s Assistant Attorney General until she left last year. Laurie had envisioned a clearinghouse that would include information on promising and effective programs that could be adapted by state and local practitioners and policymakers. Today, CrimeSolutions.gov includes more than 240 criminal and juvenile justice programs, each one accompanied by a rating of effective, promising, or showing no effects.

And we took the next important step by launching the OJP Diagnostic Center. This is a “one-stop” crime consultation service for state, local, and tribal policymakers looking to identify and implement evidence-based public safety strategies. It helps assess community strengths and challenges, and matches them with evidence-based interventions.

This is more than your typical training and technical assistance center. We’re trying to respond to broad, complex problems that require long-term strategies to address. We’re tackling a variety of issues, from police legitimacy and community relations in high-crime areas to trauma-focused programming in juvenile detention facilities. Right now, the Diagnostic Center is engaged in eight communities, with three more engagements pending. I think it represents a giant leap forward in our work to marry research with practice.

And apart from these overarching efforts, we’re working to bring the full weight of available evidence to bear on particular issues. They’re the issues many of you deal with every day – recidivism, reentry, children and violence, youth and gang crime.

A case in point is our support of evidence-based policing strategies, exemplified by our Smart Policing Initiative. And I’ll use John Tierney’s recent piece in the *New York Times* on policing and prisons in New York, which I thought was an excellent summation of the issues at play. Our National Institute of Justice supported the pioneering work done by David Weisburd and Larry Sherman in the area of “hot spots” policing described in the article. And we’ve actually built on their work.

Our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funded a study done by Dr. Weisburd and others on juvenile crime hot spots. The findings are consistent with what we’ve found to be true for adult crime. His study, which covered Seattle, found that 50 percent of all juvenile crime incidents occurred at less than 1 percent of street segments – and all juvenile crime occurred at less than 5 percent of street segments. So we continue to see the benefits and promise of hot spots policing.

It's a strategy we've supported through our programs. Our Smart Policing Initiative, administered by our Bureau of Justice Assistance, pairs law enforcement with researchers to design data-driven responses to neighborhood public safety problems, and it features several hot spots-related projects. A good example is the project in Lowell, Massachusetts. Police and analysts there are concentrating resources on three neighborhoods that account for almost 60 percent of all drug arrests in the city. Other sites – and there are 32 in all – are implementing other evidence-based approaches, working hand-in-hand with local universities and researchers, in jurisdictions both large and small.

And we're applying this evidence-based mandate to even our largest grant programs. Through Byrne-JAG, which we consider our flagship grant program, we've placed a heightened emphasis on supporting evidence-based strategies. I'll give you an example. Many of you are familiar with the Hawaii Opportunity Probation with Enforcement – or HOPE – program, which was funded as a subgrant under Byrne-JAG.

The HOPE model emphasizes immediate, predictable, and proportionate sanctions for probation violators. Research has shown remarkable success rates among participants. An NIJ evaluation found that the new arrest rate of HOPE participants was less than half that of other probationers. HOPE is now considered by many to be a model of the benefits of swift and certain punishment.

Building on the success of this approach, we launched a new program called Smart Probation to help states develop evidence-based strategies to improve probation success rates. That program is now active in nine states. And our Bureau of Justice Assistance and National Institute of Justice are working together to test the swift and certain model through a multi-site demonstration project in four jurisdictions across the country.

This focus on community corrections will become more important as practitioners and policymakers try to find ways to drive down recidivism and reincarceration rates. Helping ex-inmates stay crime-free is one of the Department's – and one of the Attorney General's – highest priorities. He chairs a Federal Interagency Reentry Council, which has participation from Cabinet-level officials and heads of 20 federal agencies. And since 2009, my agency has made more than 400 awards totaling over \$300 million under the Second Chance Act to support adult and juvenile reentry programs.

As part of our work under the Second Chance Act, we've supported states and communities in their efforts to reduce the incidence of re-offending. Along with the Pew Center on the States, we funded a study by the Council of State Governments that found states are realizing success in lowering recidivism by re-directing resources from prison-building to activities like treatment, community supervision, housing and workforce development, and other approaches. Ohio, for instance, was able to reduce recidivism 11 percent over three years by using validated risk assessment instruments to target treatment and supervision to high-risk individuals. And rates in Kansas dropped 15

percent thanks to a heightened emphasis on post-release supervision, among other services.

These successes have come because legislators and decision-makers from both sides of the political aisle have come together to tackle these difficult issues. And the benefits can be seen in terms of both reduced recidivism and public cost savings.

Through our Justice Reinvestment effort, we're helping legislators and policymakers look at crime data in their states and determine how they can reallocate resources to both save money and reduce recidivism. This is – at its core – about finding sustainable ways to achieve public safety.

My agency's Bureau of Justice Assistance, working with the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the Pew Center on the States, and other groups, is supporting several Justice Reinvestment efforts. To take one example, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation, based on a Justice Reinvestment analysis, that reserves prison beds for the most serious offenders and re-focuses resources on community supervision and evidence-based programs.

The state is projected to reduce its prison population by more than 3,000 inmates over the next 10 years and save some \$422 million as a result of the new law. This in a state with one of the fastest growing prison populations and prison budgets in the entire nation! And similar things are happening in many other states, both red and blue.

We're helping to drive evidence in other areas, as well. Synthesizing and applying research is a vital part of the Department's Defending Childhood Initiative, which is designed to improve our nation's response to children who are exposed to violence. We know children are exposed to violence at unacceptably high rates – 60 percent encounter some form of violence or abuse, either directly or indirectly. And we know this exposure can have a very profound impact, both in the short- and long-terms. But there are effective approaches for dealing with it and for mitigating the consequences. The Attorney General's Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence recently submitted its final report, and we'll be spending the coming weeks and months formulating our response to its recommendations.

We're working to apply evidence and data to services for crime victims. Through our *Vision 21* initiative, our Office for Victims of Crime has met with victims, victim advocates, and a variety of criminal justice and allied stakeholders to determine how we can best meet the emerging and enduring needs of victims. A big part of that is closing the research gap. Quite frankly, our understanding of the impact and scope of victimization is far from where it ought to be. We're already working to capture more comprehensive data about victim services. And a forthcoming report will outline actions that can be taken to improve our base of knowledge and its application to practice.

And we're infusing evidence into services for youth. The National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, which is led by the White House, is bringing together

stakeholders from many disciplines and across levels of government to help cities with youth violence problems apply evidence-based strategies. And for young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, we're helping to gather and disseminate knowledge about what practices are most effective, building on the wealth of research that has come to light in recent years on adolescent brain development and pathways to desistance.

I believe one of my agency's most important jobs is to make sure that the latest and best information is not only available but accessible. In this economy – and in this era of growing public safety responsibilities – it's critical that we find a way to help our state and local partners adapt and use knowledge.

This is a role I think we can all play. If you're a researcher, I encourage you to work closely with practitioners to align your priorities. If you're a justice system professional, reach out to researchers and hear what they have to say. If you're a policymaker, use your leverage as a leader and convener to bring both groups together and design smart, effective strategies. And if you're a journalist, make a strong effort to inform your reportage by the best available data and research, as many of you are already doing.

By doing all of these things, I think we'll be able to build a truly evidence-based justice system, one that puts knowledge at the center. This, I think, is the key to smart justice.

Thank you.

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