

REMARKS

OF

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AT THE

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE

**EVIDENCE FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN
AND AROUND THE WORLD
A WORKSHOP OF THE FORUM ON GLOBAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION
PANEL TITLED, "WHAT IS EVIDENCE AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?"**

ON

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Thank you, Mark [Rosenberg]. I'm happy to be here. And let me commend the Institute of Medicine – and everyone in this room – for taking on this issue of violence prevention.

I was pleased to read some of the material being prepared for this Forum and to see how closely your goals mirror ours. Some of the themes I see echo language that we're consistently using – language about how violence is not inevitable, that successful programs exist in many places, and that the best approach is a comprehensive approach. These are the very phrases we use at the Office of Justice Programs.

It's encouraging to see how this commitment to evidence-based practices and policies has taken hold and is expanding. You're all to be applauded.

This will be a bit tricky for me, trying to condense all that we have to say about evidence-based violence prevention into just a few minutes. This notion of evidence-based practice is one that permeates our agency and informs virtually all our programs and activities.

Let me begin by saying that the Office of Justice Programs has always had a mandate to support the development and application of research and other forms of evidence. For many years, that responsibility fell primarily – almost solely – to our National Institute of Justice, with our Bureau of Justice Statistics leading our data collection efforts. But back in 2009, we began an earnest effort to make evidence part of our thinking across the agency, not just in NIJ and BJS, but including our grant-making offices.

What we needed was something to bring all these pieces together – to help tie together the research and science with the programming and policy sides. So we initiated what we call the Evidence Integration Initiative, or E2I, as we refer to it. E2I has three basic goals:

- to improve both the quantity and quality of evidence we generate;
- to integrate that evidence more effectively into program and policy decisions; and
- to improve the translation of evidence into practice.

As I suggested, this is an agency-wide effort, and it's intended to help the field better understand what's been shown to work based on accepted scientific principles. There are two major components of E2I. One is something you'll hear about later from my senior advisor, Phelan Wyrick – CrimeSolutions.gov. Basically, this is a clearinghouse of evidence-based programs covering a range of criminal and juvenile justice issues – from law enforcement to victims to corrections, and beyond.

The other component is something we call the OJP Diagnostic Center. This is a “one-stop” crime consultation service for state, local, and tribal policymakers who are looking to identify and implement evidence-based public safety strategies. The idea is to help assess community strengths and challenges, and match those with evidence-based

interventions. And we're looking, not just at isolated issues, but rather at broad-scope, system-changing types of problems. In other words, we're trying to address large, strategic challenges in a way that can really make a long-term difference in communities. Right now, the Diagnostic Center is engaged with eight communities across the country.

So that, I think, gives you a sense of our larger strategic approach to integrating evidence. We're also working to incorporate evidence into a number of specific program areas – and I'd like to highlight just a couple.

One of our top priorities is addressing youth violence. As I'm sure many of you would agree, this is one of the most complex and intractable problems in criminal justice. And because it is so complex, we've learned over time that tackling it involves many people – stakeholders from all sectors and from all levels of government. It's that comprehensive approach I mentioned earlier.

So the White House created a network of cities and federal partners to share information and develop effective strategies to reduce youth and gang violence. It's called the National Forum for Youth Violence Prevention, and my agency is leading it, in partnership with other federal agencies. The Forum brings together groups from across the spectrum – local and federal leaders, law enforcement officials, educators, health professionals, community and faith-based organizations, businesses and philanthropies, citizens, and young people themselves.

It's built around three principles – multi-disciplinary partnerships, data-driven strategies, and balanced approaches that emphasize prevention, intervention, and reentry, as well as enforcement. There are 10 cities now involved, and their goal is to design and implement sound, evidence-based approaches to this problem. And these approaches build on programs like CureViolence in Chicago – formerly known as Chicago CeaseFire – that follow a public health model of violence prevention – treating violence like a disease, attacking it at its source.

We also know that violent offending and victimization can be closely intertwined. We've learned through research that there's a very real link between being exposed to violence as a child and later criminal behavior, not to mention a host of other negative consequences. And we know that the prevalence of violence to which children are exposed is very high – on the order of 60 percent of all U.S. children. But we also know that there are programs out there that are effective in identifying and helping to prevent this exposure, and in enhancing resiliency among children who have already been exposed.

In October 2010, the Attorney General launched an initiative called Defending Childhood that my agency has the lead on. It has three broad goals: to prevent children's exposure to violence, whether as victims or as witnesses; to mitigate the negative effects experienced by those who are exposed; and to develop knowledge about and raise awareness of the issue. We're funding demonstration and seed projects in sites across the

country, and we're supporting research to improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of exposure to violence.

The Attorney General also appointed a task force to explore this issue, and they spent last year holding hearings across the country. Some of the witnesses gave really compelling stories that underscored how much work we have to do. There was one young man who told the story of his mother's abuse at the hands of his father. The response by law enforcement and child protection was to remove him and his siblings from the home, place them with separate foster families – in effect, breaking up the family – and send them to different schools, in essence, taking them away from the only support network they had. There were other stories like this that showed that we're not doing nearly enough to protect kids, and what we are doing can sometimes be harmful.

The task force recently presented its final report to the Attorney General. It contains 56 recommendations for action – not just by the federal government, but by all sectors. Developing a strategy to respond to those recommendations will be one of our highest priorities over the coming weeks and months.

As you can see, we have a broad, strategic approach for integrating evidence in our programming and policymaking, and we're also applying evidence-based principles to specific programs and issues. And I could give a dozen other examples of how this is working. But I think the important point to make is that we've reached the point in violence prevention – and criminal justice generally – where evidence is occupying a central position. And I think it's safe to say this is where the future of public safety lies.

Thank you.

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