
PREFACE

This report assesses the cost-effectiveness of several crime-prevention strategies that involve early intervention in the lives of people at risk of pursuing a criminal career. Because this assessment is based on limited data, the results are subject to large uncertainties. However, in comparing the alternatives with each other and with a repeat-offender minimum-sentence incarceration approach, we find differences large enough to identify some promising alternatives for further demonstration and analysis.

This research originated in an invitation by the University of California's Crime Policy Project¹ to make a presentation at a seminar on the future of criminal-justice policy in California. The seminar, which included two other presentations, was held on May 19, 1995, in Oakland and was attended by several dozen policy analysts, legislative staff members, and criminal-justice practitioners and activists.

After the seminar, RAND and the James Irvine Foundation sponsored additional work to refine the analysis. The resulting report, a product of RAND's Criminal Justice Program, is intended for an audience similar in character to that at the seminar. Although the report focuses on California, the lessons are drawn from experience in various parts of the United States and have national implications.

¹The Crime Policy Project is sponsored by two University of California elements—the California Policy Seminar (a joint initiative with the California state government) and the University of California at Berkeley Law School.

This report supersedes the first edition of *Diverting Children from a Life of Crime*, MR-699-UCB/RC/IF, published in 1996. It corrects errors and updates some information in the previous edition. Over the past two years, RAND has extended this line of research to examine a broader range of costs and benefits of early childhood interventions. See *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*, MR-898-TCWF, 1998. Related research in the criminal justice arena is now in progress with funding from the Culpeper Foundation and the W. T. Grant Foundation.